the weekly
Standard

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# BRIAN LAMB'S AMERICA

NOVEMBER 8, 1999 • $3.9

## In praise of C-SPAN, our national historian

BY DAVID BROOKS

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# Buchanan and His Bedfellows

Patrick Buchanan's splenetic outburst on the political loyalties of *New York Times* columnist William Safire puts THE SCRAPBOOK in mind of the old adage, "Better to keep your mouth shut and have people suspect you of being an anti-Semite than open it and remove all doubt."

Here's how Buchanan answered ABC's Diane Sawyer on Oct. 26, when she asked the Reform party's newest star about criticism from Safire, his "old friend at the Nixon White House." First of all, said Buchanan, "William Safire is not a friend of mine. And I do not think he is an honorable man, personally." Harsh, but still within bounds. However, Buchanan continued, "With regard to Mr. Safire, I've got to say: I represent America first. I represent America only. Mr. Safire, in my judgment, has always put Israel a little bit ahead of his own country."

Now, the traditional anti-Semitic slander has been to accuse Jews of "dual loyalty"—i.e., however much they love their country, Jews are incapable of being like other citizens, since they are loyal to Israel as well. Buchanan here goes beyond even that, accusing Safire of being not even a loyal American, insofar as he puts another country first. Shouldn't there be a little more outrage about this calumny? Does Buchanan's Reform party sponsor Pat Choate agree? Does Ross Perot?

Meanwhile, loyal SCRAPBOOK readers will not be surprised to learn that Buchanan has a new and voluble cheerleader, Jude Wanniski, who when last reported on by this page was favorably comparing Slobodan Milosevic to Abraham Lincoln. Wanniski-Buchanan might seem a counterintuitive alliance. On all the issues that used to animate Wanniski when he was an ardent publicist for supply-side economics—free trade, capital gains, immigration—he and Buchanan are at odds. But Wanniski's political tailspin has dropped him over the years from advising Jack Kemp to advising Louis Farrakhan. From there it was apparently just a small step down to embracing Buchanan.

And besides, as Wanniski says he explained to a rapt Buchanan, they (Wanniski, Buchanan, Buchanan's Reform party pal Lenora Fulani, Louis Farrakhan) are all Marxists now.

In an Oct. 26 letter to his clients titled "Pitchfork Pat and the Power Pyramid," Wanniski reports from "Pat Buchanan's cozy living room in McLean, Va., which I visited for the first time last week." As Wanniski relates, "I threw out several policy ideas that I believed might be useful to him, which no other candidate would risk, and he seemed enthusiastic about most of them. The one thought I shared that surprised him, I think, is that he is not a 'right-winger' at all, but is a Marxist at heart. Karl Marx, I told him, believed capitalism was doomed because its power elites would capture governments in order to reach into foreign markets, at the expense of the masses who would be left behind in the quest for global profits. I think he knew that but he looked surprised when I told him Marx, like Lincoln, believed America was the last, best hope of mankind." (Not to mention, Marx was anti-Jewish.)

These guys deserve each other. The Republican party is luckier than it knows that Buchanan left it. ♦

## Egg on Its Face

The Oct. 23 *New York Times* featured a striking story, to say the least. "To the horror and disgust of mainstream infertility groups," *Times* reporter Carey Goldberg earnestly wrote, "a longtime fashion photographer has begun offering up models as egg donors to the highest bidders, auctioning their ova via the Internet to would-be parents willing to pay up to $150,000 in hopes of having a beautiful child." Ron Harris, the photographer in question and proprietor of the site, was described as a mix of "Darwin-based eugenics, *Playboy*-style sensibilities and eBay-type commerce." Well, sort of. Try adding Barnum-style promoter to the mix.

It turns out the *Times* fell for an Internet hoax. The Web publication *Feed* reported two days later that a quick trip to Harris's personal Web page revealed links to his many porn sites. More embarrassing still, one of the models whose offspring were presumably going to fetch a high price was working a day job at such Harris properties as eroticboxoffice.com and sweet18.com. The egg story was just a promotion for his porn business.

*Feed*'s Clay Shirky put it best: "Falling for this kind of PR stunt is bad enough, but this is the same paper that spent much of the Year of Matt Drudge hectoring the rest of us on the superior accuracy of traditional news outlets. A *Times* editorial during Monica-gate derided net journalism as mere entertainment, contrasting the values of the traditional press thusly: 'Sound judgment pays homage to speed but reveres accuracy. News judgment can abet courage or invoke caution. News judgment is conscious and conscientious.' Oops." ♦



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## Taiwan On

Ever since the Senate Republicans defeated the fatally flawed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the White House has been whining about what it describes as a new and dangerous level of "partisanship" on the GOP's part. What will the administration's complaint be now that the members of the House International Relations Committee have favorably voted out of committee the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, by the overwhelming and bipartisan margin of 32-6?

Give credit to committee chairman Ben Gilman and Tom DeLay, the GOP whip, for forcing the bill to a vote, and to Chris Cox for managing its final wording. But as the committee vote showed, even Democrats, like Rep. Sam Gejdenson, the ranking member on the committee, are becoming increasingly embarrassed by the administration's supine approach to China and its hesitation in backing Taiwan, a "full-fledged democracy," in its confrontation with "the largest totalitarian state in the world" (Gejdenson's words).

Indeed, Jim Woolsey, Clinton's own former head of Central Intelligence, described the administration policy toward Beijing as one of "appeasement." Just as Britain and France's appeasement of Germany on the question of Czechoslovakia before World War II fed rather than mollified Nazi ambitions, he told the committee, so too the administration's deference to China over Taiwan is "wrongheaded and dangerous."

The administration will undoubtedly attempt to kill the bill on the House floor with a whole host of "the-world-is-going-to-end" arguments. But the House should pass it, move it to the Senate for a vote before recess, and then force the president to veto an act which, on its face, falls squarely within the commitments the United States undertook to the island's self-defense under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.

Let the White House explain why supporting the democratic government of Taipei in the face of overt military threats from Beijing is bad policy. ♦

## The Inimitable Adam Clymer

In a memorable news analysis of the first Gore-Bradley debate (headlined "Surprise Possibility: A Dignified Democratic Race"), the *New York Times*'s Adam Clymer inadvertently demonstrates how fine the distinction can be between "thoughtfulness" and fatuousness.

"In what may have been the most thoughtful comment of the evening," Clymer analyzes, "the former Senator [Bradley] cited the last President of the Soviet Union. He said Mikhail S. Gorbachev 'saw that the world must change and had the courage to make that change.'"

How deep. ♦



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# Casual

## Night Clubbing

I was about 13 at the time. It must have been a Saturday night and I was walking down Bell Boulevard in Bayside, Queens. The sidewalks were thronged with barhoppers, the traffic stiff with cars, the crosswalks crowded, parking spots few. My sister Ann was with me. So was Peggy, a friend of Ann's, and Margaret, a friend of mine.

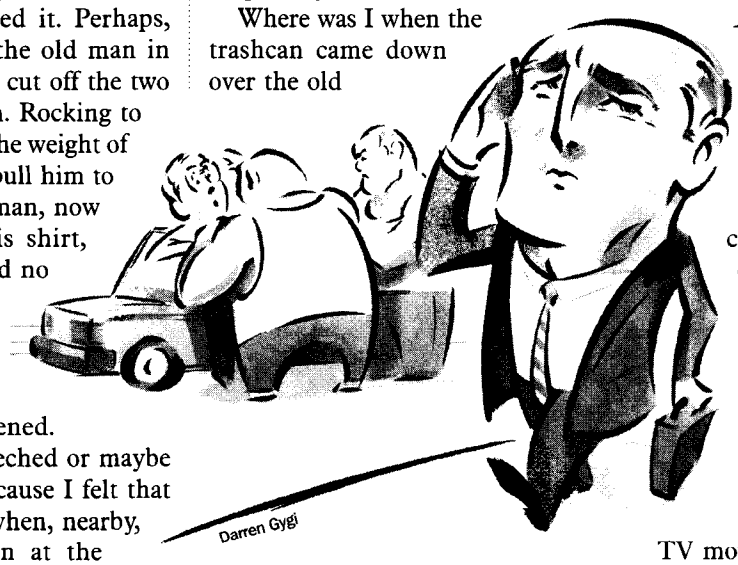
Later, when the cops came, no one could say what started it. Perhaps, someone suggested, the old man in the blue compact had cut off the two guys in the Trans Am. Rocking to and fro, looking as if the weight of his own body might pull him to the ground, the old man, now wearing blood on his shirt, told the police he had no idea why he was attacked.

I was standing on the corner across the street when it happened. Tires must have screeched or maybe someone shouted, because I felt that awful rush one gets when, nearby, civility is being torn at the seams. The traffic light turned green, and as the blue compact took a right off of Bell onto 41st Avenue, the Trans Am, horn blaring, lurched toward its rear. Then both cars stopped.

The guys in the Trans Am jumped out—they were tall, muscular, in their late twenties, wearing tight designer jeans—and began banging on the roof of the blue compact. The old man rolled down the window to see what they wanted, and that's when they started hitting him. Even with the window open, there wasn't enough room for two men to punch the driver at the same time. So while one worked over the old man, still in his car and trying his best to stay out of reach without letting go of the door lock, the other guy walked over to the sidewalk and tried to extricate a trashcan from its city-built frame.

Soon the old man lost the battle over the door lock. A person inside a car all balled up for protection is harder to injure than a person pinned against a car, his body exposed. The young man pulled the driver out. Several blows to the head and upper body later, the second guy made his way back, holding the trashcan triumphantly aloft.

Where was I when the trashcan came down over the old man's head? Across the street, one in a crowd of hundreds. Where was I when they removed the trashcan for another round of belting? Across the street. Where was I when they pushed him back into the car and emptied the dregs from the trashcan onto him, sprawled across the front seat? Just there, across the street, standing next to Ann, Margaret, and Peggy, incredulous that no one had stepped in yet; astounded that people were, in fact, cheering at the sight of a man in his sixties getting bludgeoned by two muscular six-foot guys in their twenties.




It seemed obvious that if one person, especially someone young like me, were to place himself bodily in the cramped and violent space where the fists were falling, it would all somehow stop. True, such an intervention might make things worse. But a braver person—my father, for instance—would've been ready to take that risk. I and the rest of us there that night were more afraid of what might happen if we stepped in than of what would definitely happen if no one stepped in. Only after the beating had gone on for several minutes and the crowd had grown to hundreds, with a police siren calling in the distance and getting closer, did it seem that a couple of bystanders were ready to break it up. The brutes got back in their Trans Am and drove off.

I thought of this incident recently while watching *Fight Club*, a movie about large groups of young men who take to bludgeoning each other in a half-cocked effort to reclaim their masculine identity from America's commercialized and corporate culture. Not having read the novel on which the movie is based, I expected some sort of treatment, probably ironic, of young men's struggle to rediscover courage in what has been called "a nation of cowards." Maybe *Fight Club* would defy the logic of TV movies in which the good guy is told, "Don't do it. You'll only lower yourself to his level"—the pacifist logic that attaches greater importance to preserving one's own virtue (and skin) than to preserving another's life.

Instead, the movie trots out the liberal verities. Violence is a byproduct of psychological disintegration; thus, all violence is pathological. So great is the moral compromise brought on by the characters' participation in violence that they degenerate into fascists. Conveniently, this standard critique excuses us if no one stands up for the helpless—the proverbial widow, the orphan, and the old schmuck in the blue compact who, for a reason he doesn't understand, is getting the stuffing kicked out of him.

**David Skinner**



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## Treaty Triumph

I am indeed heartened by the action our Senate took last week with the defeat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ("The Senate Republicans' Finest Hour," Oct. 25). The Left and the press vilified Senate Republicans for pushing the United States closer to doomsday—without ever making a case for ratification. They merely relied on the tired mantra of "making the world safer for our children," etc., without putting forth a cogent argument for ratification. Even President Clinton—an internationalist who enjoys sticking America's nose into others' affairs—gave the "vitally important" treaty rather yawning support until it was too late.

I concur with Richard Perle's analysis, as cited by William Kristol and Robert Kagan in their editorial, but would take it one step further: Imagine a domestic Comprehensive Gun Ban Treaty (read: gun control) among all citizens of our country. Not only would representatives of the criminal community be allowed into our homes to "verify" our compliance, but they would also have the ability to keep us out of any room of their choosing—whether they have weapons in it or not! I am quite certain that my neighbors—liberal and conservative—would see right through this dubious proposition and reject it outright. The Senate has done just that.

Well done, senators—you have shown America that we do indeed have three coequal branches of government.

M.K. Butters
*New Bern, NC*

Apart from all the other excellent reasons for having voted down the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, senators seem to have overlooked a clincher. The treaty is a wonderful example of inside-out Clintonism. For in order to enforce the treaty (at those 300-plus listening stations), we would have to *break* the treaty.

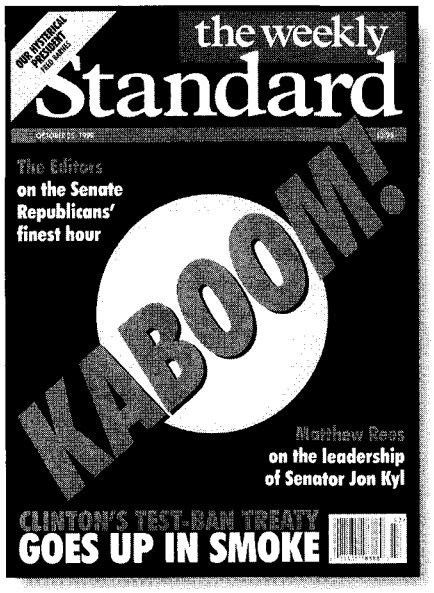
Why? Because the only way to maintain the enforcement protocol is to periodically test, repair, and upgrade it. And the only way to test a monitoring device is to see if it can "hear" underground detonations of varying yields and configurations.

Food for thought: Perhaps Clinton and his arms-control freaks are right to, as you characterize them in your editorial, not take the treaty seriously. Maybe the thing is more of a Democratic party charade than you surmise.

Philip Tyre
*Dunedin, FL*

## Stand by Taiwan

In a recent item in The Scrapbook, you write that a group of nine legislators from China were in Washington recently to lobby against the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act ("Beijing's Best Friends on the Hill," Oct. 25). You




do not illustrate why the Communist Chinese are so vehemently opposed to the bill and why the bill is so important for Taiwan and its future.

The bill provides (1) that the ultimate status of Taiwan must have the express consent of Taiwan's people; (2) that Taiwan will receive the essential equipment to maintain its self-defense capability; and (3) that there will be improved military communication between Taiwan and the United States.

Enacting the bill would be timely. According to recent reports, China has over 150 missiles aimed at Taiwan and plans to increase the number to 600 by the year 2005. China will have an overwhelming advantage over Taiwan. The act will effectively deal with this situation in which the security of Taiwan is threatened due to the imbalance of military power across the Taiwan Strait.

Why should Congress enact this bill?

–Since 1979, the United States is the only country that is committed by law to Taiwan's safety and security.

–Taiwan is strategically located in the Pacific Rim, through which 40 percent of the world's trade flows. A secure Taiwan is important for a free flow of trade in the region.

–A secure Taiwan will contribute to peace and stability in east Asia. This is in the United States' interest.

–It is in the best interest of the United States to preserve and promote American values such as self-determination and democracy.

China, of course, opposes the bill, for China unrealistically claims Taiwan as a province and does not want to see the people of Taiwan determine their own future. Close military communication between the United States and Taiwan and Taiwan's enhanced capability to defend itself would lessen the likelihood that China could annex Taiwan against the will of its 21 million people at some point in the future.

We want to emphasize, though, that Taiwanese-Americans are in favor of enhancing U.S.-China relations, as long as such progress does not take place at the expense of the people of Taiwan and their country's future as a de jure independent democracy. Nobody but the people of Taiwan has the right to determine the future of Taiwan.

Wen-yen Chen
*President, Formosan Association for Public Affairs*
*Washington, DC*

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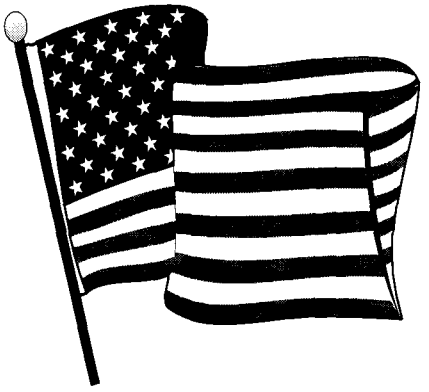

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# The Kind of Campaign Finance Reform Congress Wouldn't Talk About – But Should.

Here we are again, having just watched Congress go through its ritual dance, pretending to make a serious effort at campaign finance reform.

Once again, the dance has ended in the way it always does: the music stops and nothing happens.

That's why the American Civil Liberties Union and Public Campaign – two organizations deeply involved in campaign reform, often on opposing sides – have come together to promote a bold, comprehensive solution.

For a quarter century, the debate in Congress has been confined to two approaches: either imposing more limits on contributions to candidates and political parties and on spending by others, or eliminating limits altogether and relying solely on disclosure of major contributions.

However, both leave us with a campaign finance system based solely or primarily on private contributions from a relatively few sources. Both continue to exclude from the electoral marketplace many candidates who might make fine public officials but who lack personal wealth or access to the wealth of others, and who are therefore unable to make their case to the voters. And one of the two approaches – the attempt to impose more limits – raises constitutional questions that have led courts to strike down reform initiatives for over 25 years.

These approaches will not provide the fundamental change that is needed. But there is a third way.

We should provide an alternative and parallel system of adequate and equitable public financing for candidates willing to opt out of the privately-financed system and, as the Supreme Court has permitted, limit their spending to the amount of public financing they receive.

Public financing would enhance electoral competition. It would allow a wider range of candidates to make their case to the voters. It would make public officials more accountable to voters in general and less accountable to the often narrow economic interests of a few big contributors. And it would allow public officials to do their job instead of spending huge amounts of time raising money.

Private citizens and political parties used to print their own ballots until it was recognized that the integrity of the electoral process required the government to pay for printed ballots. For the same reason, public funds pay for polling booths, voting machines, and registrars, not to mention the salaries of public officials. It is time to apply the same logic to funding election campaigns.

The ACLU and Public Campaign believe that a voluntary system of full public financing is the only comprehensive reform that can both remedy the problem and withstand constitutional scrutiny. We need to begin discussing what that would mean, and addressing the many details that would have to be worked out. So far, neither Congress nor the White House seems interested.

But the rest of us should be.

For further information, contact:

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# Time to Pay Our Dues

Republicans took a courageous and principled stand when they defeated the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty three weeks ago. Now they need to show some political smarts, too. With the 2000 election campaign fast approaching, they should deprive the Clinton administration of one cheap, but sometimes effective, foreign policy debating point: the issue of U.S. dues to the United Nations.

In June the Senate passed legislation sponsored by Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Jesse Helms that would make funds available for paying U.S. arrears to the U.N. in exchange for implementation of stringent reforms in U.N. programs and management. The Helms legislation passed 97-2, and for good reason. For all the faults of the U.N., and for all the gamesmanship that has surrounded the issue of how to force reforms on it, Republicans and Democrats in fact agree that America should pay its bills. The U.N. was, after all, established under American leadership after World War II.

*The real choice is between the Carteresque internationalism of the Clinton administration and the more robust internationalism of Ronald Reagan.*

And Helms's plan is clever as well as principled. Instead of letting Republicans get blamed for refusing to pay our bills, Helms's strategy would shift the burden back to the Clinton administration. In order to get the funding, the administration will have to battle secretary general Kofi Annan and the rest of the U.N. bureaucracy to implement the required reforms. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Richard C. Holbrooke, is committed to Helms's proposals, which include reducing the overall U.S. share in the U.N. budget. For House Republicans to reject the Helms plan now would be snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

It's up to the House Republican leadership to display some, well, leadership. Congressman Chris Smith, who has been a noble warrior for the cause of human rights around the world, is trying once again to condition U.N. funding on a restoration of the so-called Mexico City language concerning abortion. He should relent. We are a year away from a presidential election that may again put a Republican in the White House. That president will be able to restore the pro-life Mexico City policy with the stroke of a pen. Nothing Congress can do will bring that day any closer, for even if Smith succeeds in attaching his language to the Helms legislation, President Clinton will then veto it. We'll still have to wait until January 2001 for a change in policy. Meanwhile, by seeming to be too cheap to pay our U.N. dues, Republicans will have needlessly handed the Democrats an issue for the 2000 campaign.

The entire foreign policy message of Bill Clinton and Al Gore is that Republicans are isolationists, pure and simple. The charge that Republicans refuse to pay American bills at the U.N.—unfair though it may be—gives superficial credibility to the charge. If House Republicans now throw their support to the Helms legislation, they can go a long way toward removing any taint of isolationism that would make Americans question the party's fitness to govern. And congressional Republicans would be doing a big favor for their party's nominee, whether it's George W. Bush or John McCain, by lifting the U.N. dues albatross from his neck.

Republicans need to clarify the foreign policy debate for the 2000 election. The real choice is not between internationalism and isolationism, but between the Carteresque internationalism of the Clinton administration and the more robust internationalism of Ronald Reagan. By approving the Helms plan, House Republicans can make it clear that they are not the party of Pat Buchanan, now safely and appropriately relegated to the fringes of national politics, but the party of Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, of real and principled global leadership.

*—William Kristol and Robert Kagan, for the Editors*



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# House Republicans Are Winning One

## The budget battle of 1999, hard to believe but true, has featured GOP cunning. BY TOD LINDBERG

REPUBLICANS BOTH INSIDE and outside Congress have been pleasantly surprised by how well they are doing politically in this year's budget fight with President Clinton. Ever since Clinton squashed the Republican Congress over the government shutdown in 1995-96, the autumnal rites of appropriation have been a time of dread for the GOP, an exercise in wondering who among them will be a human sacrifice come the next election as a result of drawing the wrath of the Democratic administration.

This time, simply put, they are not getting killed. In fact, thanks to their tireless reiteration of their unifying theme—namely, that they are going to protect every last dime of Social Security from marauding Democrats—and thanks to the money the GOP is spending on advertising in select congressional districts repeating the point, poll numbers show the Republican message taking hold. It looks like Republicans have at last found an incantation with the same black magic power as the Democrats' "Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment."

Now, there are those who might say that the real secret of the GOP's success, such as it is, has been timely surrender, appeasement, and subterfuge: that Republicans have wholeheartedly agreed to substantial increases in government spending. The spending caps theoretically imposed by the balanced budget agreement have in effect been blown to smithereens, and the appropriations bills themselves are, in the aggregate, full of budgetary gimmickry and self-aggrandizing assumptioneering. *This*, snort some, is what a *Republican* Congress does? Crank up spending and cook the books to hide it?

Well, up to a point. Those who see a smaller, more limited federal government as the sole test of conservative success will rightly be disappointed. At the end of the appropriations process—which is to say, before final negotiations with the White House—domestic discretionary outlays were scheduled to grow by 6 percent. The increase in outlays will surely outpace the growth of the economy in 2000. In absolute and relative terms, government is not shrinking but growing.

But this raises the question: By how much? And compared with what? In judging the Republican performance, it's only fair to take account of political reality—in particular, the terra incognita of budgeting in an era of surplus.

A better term for Bill Clinton's "Third Way" governing philosophy might be "balanced-budget liberalism." For years, Republicans ran against the federal budget deficit, while Democrats only paid lip service to the concept (though they were always prepared to raise taxes in the name of deficit reduction). With their new majority after the 1994 elections, Republicans felt obliged to attack the deficit head-on. Politically, they ran into the Clintonian buzzsaw. But in the end, thanks in no small measure to a surging economy, Clinton was happy to grant Republicans what they had always claimed was their fondest wish: a balanced federal budget.

One should, of course, be careful what one wishes for, lest one get it. Before Republicans saw it, Clinton understood the political implications of a world of budget surpluses. If your main argument against federal spending is "the deficit," then surpluses translate into more spending. The GOP leadership on Capitol Hill disagreed. Many of them still wanted to cut spending or at least restrain increases. But for the first time in their political lives, the budget deficit was no longer at hand as an easy argument against spending. And Clinton would not go along with a tax cut acceptable to Republicans, so no budget restraint would be imposed by depriving the government of tax revenue.

This is the box Republicans found themselves in at the beginning of the 1999 budget season, with the additional headache, after their 1998 election losses, of only a whisker-thin majority in the House. What's more, impeachment-related political tumult had claimed first the Gingrich speakership and then Bob Livingston's, resulting in the elevation of the amiable but untested Dennis Hastert of Illinois. This looked for all the world like an environment in which Clinton could fragment the House Republicans and dictate the spending levels he wanted, up to the limits of the budget surplus.

Indeed, this was the calculation the House leadership made at first. They were inclined to abandon the budget caps early and make an expensive peace with the White House, thereby avoiding the nightmare scenario of another government shutdown for which they would be blamed—and the end of their majority in 2000. But there was serious resistance in the ranks to the idea of popping the caps. So they hung on and looked for some other survival kit, and found an unlikely one.

They decided to make Social Security their friend. For years, the fact that government took in more in Social Security taxes than it paid in benefits, $99 billion in 1998, was irrelevant to the big picture on the deficit. In other words, government "spent" the Social Security "surplus"—that is, the deficit for running the rest of the

*Tod Lindberg is editor of Policy Review.*



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government, apart from Social Security, would have been higher by the amount of the Social Security surplus. No one seriously objected to this "raid" on the "Social Security trust fund." These are arbitrary accounting distinctions.

Then, in a series of head-scratching staff meetings devoted to the question of how not to get killed, Republicans finally hit paydirt—a line they could articulate simply and clearly, with potential for public resonance, and around which they could keep their slender majority united, against all odds. It was "Stop the Raid" on Social Security. At a stroke, they were able to declare some $147 billion of the federal budget surplus for 2000 off limits to new spending. And they were able to hold that line.

In accounting reality, this Social Security surplus figure is no less arbitrary than the budget caps supposedly still in force. But in the real world of politics, the fact is that budget caps were too abstract to hold Republicans together. Social Security is real. Clinton's rhetorical case against a tax cut hinged on protecting Social Security, for example.

Without necessarily setting out to do so, the GOP leadership essentially created a very useful artificial deficit, the size of the Social Security surplus. This "deficit" now serves as a restraint on federal spending—and will continue to do so. The Social Security surplus is estimated at about $155 billion in fiscal 2001 and $164 billion the year after. If Republicans win this point, it's likely to work for them in future budget rounds.

The story of the fiscal 2000 budget, then, is not the story of gimmicks and gewgaws. That's the story of the budget every year. The story is how a perilously thin and nervous GOP majority under an untested leader managed to change the subject in such a way as to forestall scores of billions in additional government spending at a time when *the government had the money*. Dennis Hastert turns out to be the most underestimated politician in Washington since Bill Clinton in January 1995. ♦

# Suicide Unlimited in Oregon

## The result of legalizing physician-assisted suicide is bad medicine and bad policy. BY WESLEY J. SMITH

LAST WEEK, Congress took up the issues of pain control and physician-assisted suicide, with the House voting 271-156 to pass the Pain Relief Promotion Act. The legislation, if passed, would improve pain control while deterring physician-assisted suicide. Doctors who prescribe lethal drugs for the purpose of killing their terminally ill patients would be subject to losing their federal licenses to prescribe.

On the floor of the House and in comments to media, supporters of the bill referred specifically to the example of Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal. They were right to do so. Oregon's assisted suicide law continues to demonstrate that permitting doctors to help kill patients is bad medicine and even worse public policy.

The most recent assisted suicide in Oregon is a case in point. On October

*Wesley J. Smith is an attorney for the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force. His next book will be* Culture of Death: The Destruction of Medical Ethics in America.


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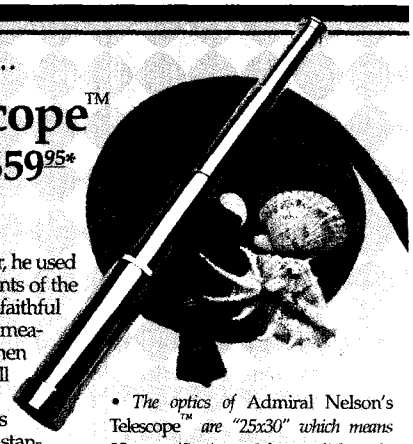

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17, 1999, the *Oregonian* published an account of one patient who committed suicide with the assistance of medical professionals. The patient's family had provided the newspaper with the details of the assisted killing, unintentionally showing how Oregon's law endangers those who are the least capable of defending themselves.

Kate Cheney, age 85, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and wanted assisted suicide, but there was a problem. She may have had dementia, which raised questions of mental competence. So, rather than prescribe lethal drugs, her doctor referred her to a psychiatrist, as required by law.

Cheney was accompanied to the consultation by her daughter, Erika Goldstein. The psychiatrist found that Cheney had a loss of short-term memory. Even more worrisome, it appeared that her daughter had more of a vested interest in Cheney's assisted suicide than did Cheney herself. The psychiatrist wrote in his report that while the assisted suicide seemed consistent with Cheney's values, "she does not seem to be explicitly pushing for this." He also determined that she did not have the "very high capacity required to weigh options about assisted suicide." Accordingly, he nixed the assisted suicide.

Advocates of legalization might, at this point, smile happily and point out that such refusals are part of the way the law operates. But that isn't the end of Kate Cheney's story. According to the *Oregonian*, Cheney appeared to accept the psychiatrist's verdict, but her daughter did not. Goldstein viewed the guidelines protecting her mother's life as obstacles, a "roadblock" to Cheney's right to die. So, she shopped for another doctor.

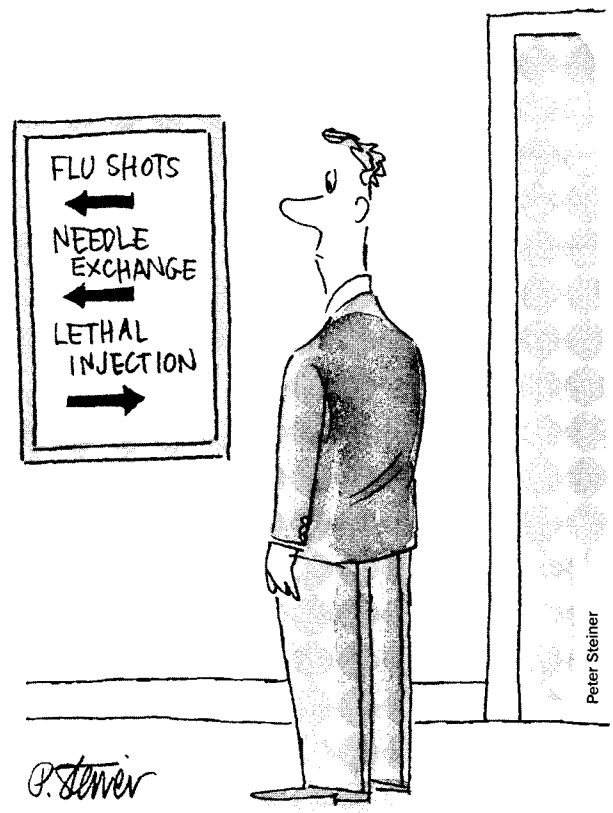
Goldstein's demand for a second opinion was acceded to by Kaiser Permanente, Cheney's HMO. This time a clinical psychologist rather than an MD-psychiatrist examined her. Like the first doctor, the psychologist found Cheney had memory problems. For example, she could not recall when she had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The psychologist also worried about familial pressure, writing that Cheney's decision to die "may be influenced by her family's wishes." Still, despite these reservations, the psychologist determined that Cheney was competent to kill herself and approved the writing of the lethal prescription.

The final decision was left to an ethicist/administrator who works for Kaiser named Robert Richardson. Dr. Richardson interviewed Cheney, who told him she wanted the pills not because she was in irremediable pain but because she feared not being able to attend to her personal hygiene. After the interview, satisfied that she was competent, Richardson gave the okay for the assisted killing.

Cheney did not take the pills right away. At one point, she asked to die when her daughter had to help her shower after an accident with her colostomy bag, but she quickly changed her mind. Then, Cheney went into a nursing home for a week so that her family could have some respite from care giving. The time in the nursing home seemed to have pushed Cheney into wanting immediate death. As soon as she returned home, she declared her desire to take the pills. After grandchildren were called to say their goodbyes, Cheney took the poison. She died with her daughter at her side, telling her what a courageous woman she was.

This sad story illustrates many profound and unsettling truths about assisted suicide:

*Protective guidelines don't protect.* Once the legal view of killing is shifted from automatically bad to possibly good, it becomes virtually impossible to restrict physician-assisted suicide to the very narrow range of patients for whom proponents claim it is reserved. The "protective guidelines" allegedly designed to guard the lives of vulnerable people soon become scorned as obstacles to be circumvented. And so, eligibility for physician-assisted suicide steadily expands to permit the killing of increasing categories of ill and disabled patients. Thus, an act that is supposed to be "rare" is likely to become more common. And what was seen as a last resort, something that might be considered if palliative treatment failed, becomes an alternative to treatment.



Peter Steiner

This has certainly happened in the Netherlands, where euthanasia has been permitted since 1973. The Dutch law, in fact, contains much stronger guidelines



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than Oregon's, yet these protections have long ceased to be of any practical use and are routinely ignored with impunity. Thus, in the Netherlands, not only are terminally ill patients who ask for euthanasia killed by doctors, but so are chronically ill patients, and depressed patients who have no disease. Babies born with disabilities are also killed at the request of parents who allege their children are incapable of a "livable life."

According to repeated reports on Dutch euthanasia, at least 1,000 patients are killed each year who did not ask to die. At the same time, 59 percent of the doctors who kill patients fail to report them as required by the guidelines. One recent study of the Dutch experience puts the matter grimly, saying physician-assisted suicide is "beyond effective control."

The same pattern is already developing in Oregon, where assisted suicide has only been permitted legally for two years. Rather than being strictly reserved for the rare case of irremediable pain, as Oregon voters were told it would be when they legalized the practice, it turns out that none of the patients reported to have undergone assisted suicide were in untreatable agony. Most, like Kate Cheney, were worried about being a burden and requiring assistance with the tasks of daily living. That is a serious problem to be sure, but one which experts on treating dying people are adept at relieving.

*Doctor-shopping becomes the key to obtaining death.* A major selling point of assisted-suicide advocacy is that close personal relationships between doctors and patients will prevent "wrongly decided" assisted suicides. But Oregon proves the utter emptiness of this promise. Kate Cheney and her family were not deterred in the least by a psychiatrist's refusal to approve her self-poisoning. They simply went to another doctor.

Cheney's family wasn't so much looking for a medical opinion as an opinion that confirmed what they had already decided. This is reminiscent of the Woody Allen line from the movie, *Manhattan*. When Allen's character bemoans his marriage breaking up, a friend reminds him that his psychiatrist warned him that his soon-to-be ex-wife would be big trouble. Allen smiles ruefully and says, "Yeah, but she was so pretty, I got another psychiatrist."

Cheney's case is not the only example from Oregon in which doctor-shopping has hastened death. As reported in newspapers and bioethics journals, the first woman known to have legally committed assisted-suicide in Oregon went to her own doctor when her breast cancer prevented her from doing aerobics and gardening. When he refused to help kill her, she consulted a second doctor. This physician also refused to help kill her, diagnosing her as depressed. So, she went to an assisted suicide advocacy group. After speaking on the phone with her, the group's medical director referred her to a "death doctor" who was known to the group for being willing to issue lethal prescriptions. She died a mere two and a half weeks later from the poison pills.

According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, at least five other people who died by assisted suicide in Oregon in 1998 went to multiple physicians before finding one willing to help kill them. The length of time between meeting with the prescribing doctor and death in at least a few cases was 15 days—the exact waiting period required by law. Legalizing assisted suicide thus distorts medical care for patients near the end of their lives.

Primary care physicians who would prefer treating a patient who wants to be killed are jettisoned in favor of doctors with an ideological predisposition toward assisted suicide. Moreover, physician-assisted suicide means doctors who refuse to "assist" are subject to emotional blackmail. Patients can simply tell their physicians: Either you give me


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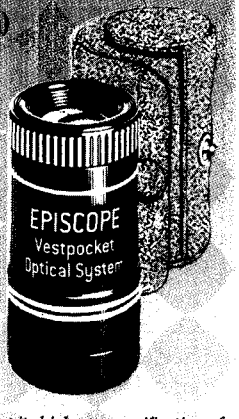


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the pills or I go to a doctor who will.

Death doctors are a malevolent twist on the draft doctors of the Vietnam war era who kept young men from being inducted by finding physical anomalies to obtain medical deferment for their "patients." But no one pretended that draft doctors were practicing medicine. They were engaged in politics, pure and simple. The same phenomenon is now happening in Oregon, only instead of trying to save lives, death doctors ideologically support the taking of life. This means that even the most secure and long-lasting doctor-patient relationships provide zero protection against assisted suicide.

*HMOs are a lethal part of the mix.* One awful truth about assisted suicide is that it will be performed in the context of managed care where profits are made from cutting costs. In Kate Cheney's case, the final authority was a Kaiser HMO medical ethicist. This raises the appearance, if not the actuality, of a terrible conflict of interest. The poison that killed Cheney cost Kaiser approximately $40. It could have cost the HMO $40,000 to care for her properly until her natural death. The potential for economically driven death decisions is too obvious to be denied and is likely to become more pronounced as people become desensitized to doctors' acting as killers. The same can be said about government-financed health care. Oregon Medicaid, which rations health care to the poor, pays for assisted suicide.

Oregon illustrates the danger of redefining killing as a medical act. Yet, despite the warning signs, advocates continue to press legalization throughout the nation. Several states, including California, have legislation pending, while Maine voters will likely face a legalization initiative in November 2000. The only question is whether we will respond to terminal illness with better medical care, in which case last week's House vote is a positive sign, or ignore the horrors of the Netherlands and Oregon and step intentionally off of the ethical cliff. ♦

# Free Trade with Free China

## Instead of worrying about Beijing, the U.S. should let Taiwan into the WTO. BY GREG MASTEL

The fate of China's effort to join the World Trade Organization is unclear; matters involving internal deliberations in Beijing usually are. There is always the possibility that China is waiting until the last minute to wrap up WTO negotiations, hoping that the Clinton administration's desire to build a record of achievement for its engagement policy will force Washington to lower the bar for WTO membership. The emerging consensus, however, seems to be that China is simply unwilling to tackle the domestic reforms that WTO membership requires.

In the spirit of "If I don't win, I'll take my ball and go home," China is also insisting that if it cannot become a WTO member, Taiwan cannot be allowed to join either. Surprisingly, the United States seems willing to tolerate this Chinese petulance, though doing so runs directly counter to U.S. interests. The United States should press for Taiwan's membership in upcoming WTO negotiations whether or not China is admitted.

This latest example of a convoluted and counterproductive stance toward the greater China region is but one of many strange results of the "one China" policy. Since its establishment in the 1970s, virtually every major assumption underlying the one China policy has dramatically changed: The Soviet Union has collapsed, ending the Cold War; Taipei has transformed itself from an authoritarian regime to a functioning democracy; and Beijing has moved from being a questionable ally to a possible enemy.

Still, the one China policy persists largely unchanged, and Beijing expresses outrage at even the smallest evolution in U.S. relations with Taiwan, as demonstrated by the yearlong tantrum following the visit of Taiwan's President Lee to his U.S. alma mater. As a result of this policy, the United States continues to refuse to allow senior Taiwanese officials to visit the United States or even leave their planes while they are refueling in Hawaii, senior U.S. officials are generally not allowed to visit Taiwan, and this summer the United States effectively sided with Beijing against Taipei when President Lee suggested that some changes in the Beijing-Taipei dialogue were long overdue.

Now the State Department seems poised to acquiesce to another unreasonable PRC demand pertaining to Taiwan. While China's unwillingness to embrace economic reforms such as opening its market to agricultural and manufactured imports and reforming state-owned enterprises has slowed its WTO application to a near standstill, Taiwan's application has moved along smoothly. From the outset of accession talks, Taipei agreed to accept the full WTO disciplines applied to developed countries—something Beijing has steadfastly refused to consider. It also sought membership as a customs territory, not an independent country, to avoid offending Beijing. Largely because of Taipei's positive attitude, Taiwan has concluded bilateral WTO accession talks with all interested countries, including the United States, the European Union, and Japan.

Although China remains outside

*Greg Mastel is director of the Global Economic Policy Project at the New America Foundation.*



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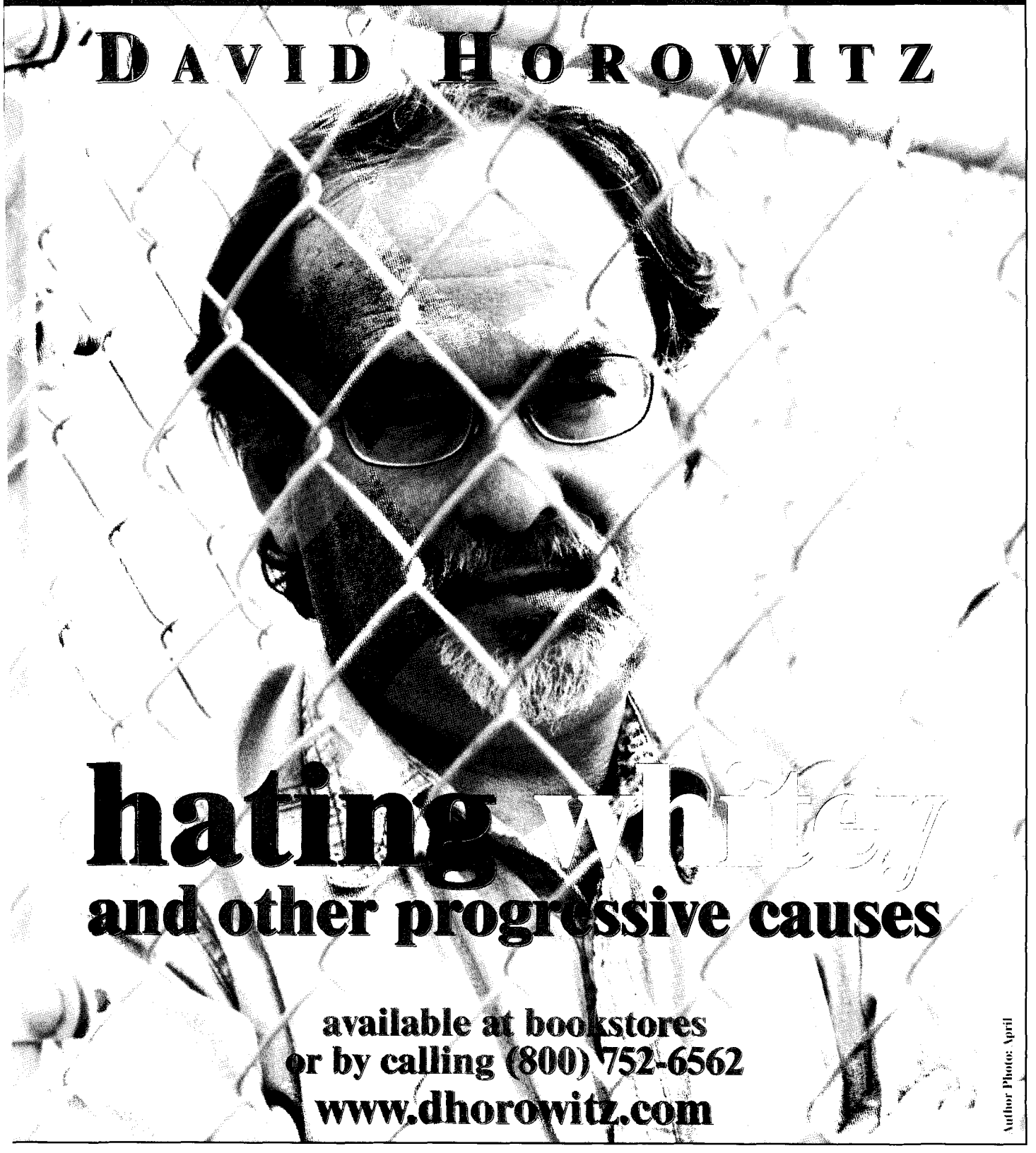

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the WTO, Beijing has insisted that Taiwan not be allowed to join until it is admitted. This position is not only arrogant but also surprising, in that Hong Kong was allowed to enter the WTO as a separate entity before control reverted to China. Now China appears to be attempting to recruit allies like Hong Kong and Pakistan to work its will, although neither has any unresolved trade issues with Taiwan. Hong Kong, in fact, concluded a bilateral WTO accession agreement with Taipei some time ago.

Taiwan has looked to the United States, as the de facto senior member of the WTO and the unofficial arbiter of such matters, to press the case for its membership in the run-up to the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle at the end of November. The United States has long taken the position that the WTO is a trade organization, not a political one, and the applications for membership by China and Taiwan should be considered separately on their merits. Obviously, if that is the decision paradigm, Taiwan should now be admitted and Beijing remain outside until it is prepared to accept trade disciplines.

Recently, however, there have been disturbing signs that U.S. resolve is weakening on this issue. U.S. officials have begun to suggest that Taiwan's WTO membership requires unanimity of support among interested WTO members, a position that effectively gives Beijing, acting through Hong Kong or another surrogate, veto power over Taiwan's application.

Although it might help to prevent a fit of pique from Beijing, keeping Taiwan out of the WTO is not in the best interest of either the United States or the WTO. In return for admission to the WTO, Taipei has agreed to lower hundreds of tariffs and non-tariff barriers. This market opening would make possible hundreds of millions of dollars worth of new U.S. exports to Taiwan of products ranging from pork to sophisticated electronics. Taiwan already imports more from the United States than the PRC; in 1998, total U.S. exports to Taiwan were $17 billion, and the total for the PRC was only $14 billion. If Taiwan became a WTO member, it would certainly be among the most promising foreign markets for U.S. exporters.

Beyond that, the credibility of the WTO is at stake. The WTO was conceived as an unbiased policeman of international trade, which would facilitate expanding trade and arbitrate trade disputes without regard for outside concerns. If the WTO allows Taiwan to be excluded from its membership because of the entirely political concerns of a non-member, that credibility will be seriously damaged and the precedent will be set for future political manipulation of WTO negotiations and operations. If the body is used as yet another diplomatic forum for endless political machinations, it will soon become just another discredited international organization.

Patrick Arrasmith

Clinton administration officials are correct in noting that the WTO is a multilateral body, and Washington alone cannot ordain Taipei's membership. If it chose to, however, Washington could challenge those countries that stand in Taipei's way on Beijing's behalf and recruit other WTO members to press Taiwan's membership. There is no guarantee that this initiative would succeed, but there is no guarantee that any of the other trade negotiating initiatives that the United States plans to pursue through the WTO will succeed either. Still, the United States persists in advancing controversial initiatives to eliminate tariffs on various industrial products and begin discussions on integrating labor and environmental issues into the WTO in the face of considerable, open opposition. Given the stakes for both the United States and the world, Taiwan's WTO application deserves no less an effort.

To put it simply, Taiwan has earned WTO membership. Against considerable domestic opposition, Taipei has pursued economic reform and built an open, vibrant market economy. It is clearly more qualified for WTO membership than dozens of countries that are now WTO members. The United States has a considerable amount to gain from Taiwan's WTO membership; but beyond that, admitting Taiwan is simply the right thing to do—regardless of whether China is also a member. It would be a mistake to bow to Beijing's unreasonable and ever expanding interpretation of the out-of-date one China policy and quietly allow Taiwan to be unjustly denied a seat at the WTO table.

If the Clinton administration is unwilling to take up this cause on its merits, Taiwan's supporters in Congress are well advised to press the issue hard in the next few weeks. After all, the Constitution assigns Congress primary responsibility for international trade. This is a matter best not left to diplomats, who seem more interested in bowing to Beijing than advancing U.S. interests. ♦



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# Incitement to Violence

## Do the Palestinians Live up to Their Oslo Commitments?

In the so-called "Oslo Agreement", often called the "peace process", Israel undertook unilaterally to make valuable concessions to the Palestinians, concessions that would eventually enable them to form an autonomous entity and to be masters of their own destiny. Never in the recorded history of mankind has any state made such concessions to one of its resident minorities. Israel requested and was solemnly promised very little in return—primarily that the Palestinians would abstain from violence and from incitement to violence.

## What are the facts?

The reality, regrettably, has not at all lived up to the agreement and to the promises made. While Arafat and other Palestinian leaders proclaim their peaceful intentions in English before Western audiences, they are brutally frank when they address their own people in Arabic and away from Western newspeople and television cameras. There is constant incitement to violence and frank declaration of the ultimate goal—firmly embedded in the never rescinded PLO Covenant—namely the destruction of the State of Israel and its replacement by "Palestine," an Arab state.

> "Peace will not come...until the Palestinians and the Arab nations commit themselves to full acceptance of Israel and are willing to live with it in peace."

The statements that follow were made by Palestinian leaders not too long ago. They are representative of similar ones made before and since.

**PA Chairman Yasser Arafat** ***(Palestinian Television, August 9, 1997):*** *"We must confront them, we must confront them. We must confront them in every sense of the word."*

**Yasser Arafat** ***(Palestinian Television, August 6, 1997):*** *"...let us commit ourselves before Allah and the Palestinian people that we shall lead the coming battle as we have led previous battles. An oath is an oath and a promise is a promise. The whole world stands by us, while they are alone. They are afraid, but we are not. We cling to the oath and the promise. The Palestinian people is faithful to its oath, the one which we swore upon the first day when the initial shot was fired and the first of our martyrs fell...We are marching together with the blessing of Allah, my brothers, we are marching together to Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem."*

**Kamel Hamid, head of Fatah (a faction of the PLO)** ***(At a Rally, August 10, 1997):*** *"...all means are legitimate to uproot the despicable occupation."*

**Sheikh Hamed Bitawi, chairman of the Palestine Religious Scholars Association** ***(July 27, 1997):*** *"That which befell the infidel nations will also occur to the State of Israel. We are certain that Allah will destroy the State of Israel either through natural disasters, such as an earthquake, or at the hands of the Moslems, or both."*

**PA Mufti Ikrama Sabri** ***(In a sermon at Al-Aksa Mosque, July 11, 1997):*** *"Oh Allah, destroy America for she is ruled by Zionist Jews...Allah shall take revenge on behalf of his prophet against the colonialist settlers who are sons of monkeys and pigs..."*

**PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Feisal Husseini** ***(May 18, 1997):*** *"Israel is attempting to obstruct peace...The only option remaining for us will be an alternative option...war."*

**Yasser Arafat** ***(Addressing a crowd in Tulkarem, April 28, 1997):*** *"I now see the walls of Jerusalem, the mosques of Jerusalem, the churches of Jerusalem. My brothers! With blood and with spirit we will redeem you, Palestine!"*

**Nabil Ramlawi** ***(At a session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Reported March 17, 1997):*** *"Israeli authorities...infected by injection 300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus during the years of the intifada."*

All of these actual verbatim quotations are only a minute fraction of the inflammatory statements with which Palestinian leaders whip up their followers to a frenzy of hatred and violence against Israel. It is totally against the letter and the spirit of the Oslo accord. But it is in line with all the other acts of defiance and non-compliance on the part of the Palestinians. For example, and most egregiously perhaps, that famous Covenant that unequivocally calls for the destruction of Israel has never been rescinded. Instead of combating terrorist activity, the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) continues to release well-known members of terrorist groups. Another blatant violation is the size and the weaponry of the so-called P.A. police force, which was fixed by Oslo at a maximum of 24,000, but which is now estimated at over 50,000 members, many of them former terrorists and equipped with smuggled advanced military weapons. It is essentially an army in waiting. How do people expect Israel to bring further "sacrifices for peace" to appease these fanatics and why, in the face of daily evidence of Palestinian intransigence and murderous hatred, should Israel even consider turning over vital strategic assets to those who are openly committed to its destruction? Peace will not come to this part of the world until the Palestinians and the Arab nations commit themselves to full acceptance of Israel and are willing to live with it in peace. And that day seems to be a long way off.

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# A Worthy Nobel, for a Change

## Doctors Without Borders wins the Nobel Peace Prize. And rightfully so. BY ARCH PUDDINGTON

IF THERE IS ANYTHING to complain about in the selection of Doctors Without Borders for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, it is the timing. The group should have received the honor 15 years ago, when its volunteers were repairing the shattered limbs of Afghan victims of Soviet land mines and treating famished Ethiopian peasants reduced to starvation by Communist economic policies. Instead, the Nobel committee chose then to celebrate the likes of Rigoberta Menchú, the Guatemalan woman whose story of repression was as much fiction as truth; Joseph Rotblat, the founder of the Pugwash Conference and a man highly sympathetic to the Soviet Union; the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, whose Soviet branch functioned as a mouthpiece for official peace propaganda; and, of course, Yasser Arafat.

But better late than never. By Nobel standards, the award, even now, is almost a daring one. Especially when paying tribute to humanitarian relief work, the Nobel committee almost always chooses those who maintain a scrupulously non-ideological profile. Doctors Without Borders, by contrast, combined courageous humanitarian work in the world's most dangerous environments with a direct, unequivocal political message. That message, simply put, is that Communist totalitarianism was the root cause of the death, starvation, poverty, and general mayhem that afflicted the Third World during the Cold War's waning years.

The organization's anti-communism is all the more remarkable given its leftish beginnings in France. Médecins Sans Frontières was founded in 1971 by young French doctors whose defining political experience had come in street battles during the 1968 student upheavals. Like other members of the French New Left, the doctors believed that morality lay with the forces of Third World revolution, that bourgeois democracy had failed, and that American imperialism constituted the world's greatest evil. They would soon learn otherwise.

The doctors received their first international experience in Biafra's struggle for independence from Nigeria. The lesson of that catastrophic war was that not even the most "progressive" regime would support the breakup of Africa's largest country, no matter what the human cost. Next came Vietnam and Cambodia. Like the rest of the French Left, the doctors identified the United States as the aggressor in Southeast Asia and anticipated the restoration of a humane order once the Americans pulled out. Instead, the group's volunteers found themselves setting up makeshift hospitals on the Thai-Cambodian border to treat the refugees from Pol Pot's reign of terror. The doctors saw the victims and heard the accounts of a murderous, insane egalitarian order under construction. They soon came to understand what the rest of the world's leftists refused to accept: that the Khmer Rouge "liberators" were waging a war of genocidal proportions against their own people.

Cambodia and Vietnam, where the exodus of the boat people was underway, forced the founders of Doctors Without Borders to reassess their cherished assumptions. Then came the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The group was quickly on the scene, setting up hospitals and sending medical volunteers inside the war-torn country. This required considerable bravery. The Soviets regarded relief agencies as a legitimate target, and looked on the doctors much as they regarded the CIA. Soon the Red Army sent helicopters to bomb the group's facilities and launched an effort to capture or kill its doctors.

With Afghanistan, the transformation of Doctors Without Borders from acolytes of Sartre to apostles of Alexander Solzhenitsyn became complete. In 1984, *Foreign Affairs* published an article by the group's executive director, Claude Malhuret, which alerted the world to Moscow's terror and mass murder in Afghanistan. Malhuret detailed the tactics—bombing of civilians, the leveling of villages, the widespread use of mines and booby traps—that undergirded Moscow's campaign. With few Western journalists in Afghanistan, Malhuret's report was influential, particularly his claim that the resistance might prevent a Soviet triumph if given sufficient outside assistance.

Médecins Sans Frontières had even more influence in the debate over famine in Ethiopia. As in Afghanistan, the doctors provided truthful reports about the real nature of the crisis. While most news accounts accepted the regime's explanation—lack of rain, poor soil, and overpopulation, not to mention the charge that the West had been too slow in sending aid—the doctors placed responsibility squarely on the regime's shoulders. In a report that had a major impact on Western attitudes, Malhuret explained that the major cause of famine was the mass peasant resettlement, modeled on Stalin's forced collectivization of the Ukrainian countryside, with its toll of millions dead.

Since the end of the Cold War, Doctors Without Borders has continued to take on the hard cases—

*Arch Puddington, vice president for research at Freedom House, is the author of the forthcoming book* Broadcasting Freedom: the Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty *(University Press of Kentucky).*



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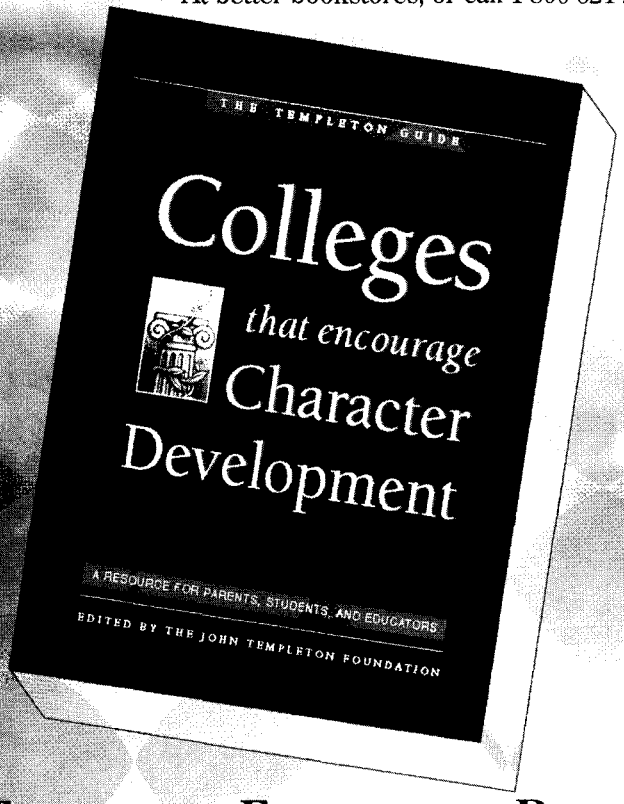


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Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone. But it was the 1994 Rwanda genocide that sparked what may be the group's most consequential involvement in political debate. Having witnessed the shocking fallout of the world's passivity when Rwanda's majority Hutus went on a genocidal offensive against the Tutsis, Bernard Kouchner, one of the group's founders, launched a campaign for the doctrine of humanitarian intervention—the concept that the outside world has an obligation to override a country's sovereignty to prevent mass killings of civilians. His efforts are partly responsible for the relatively expeditious response to the crises in Kosovo and East Timor.

Over the years, the group's leaders have moved on to careers in government and politics. Kouchner is now U.N. administrator in Kosovo. Malhuret left the organization in 1986 to serve as France's minister for human rights, a post created for him. He is today a leader of the conservative Republican party and mayor of Vichy. Malhuret's associate, Rony Brauman, rediscovered his Jewish roots; this once fervent supporter of the PLO went on to produce a documentary about Adolf Eichmann. During the 1980s, Brauman spent many hours with Irving Brown, the American labor movement's international affairs director, after Brown fell terminally ill. In his youth, Brauman had blamed Brown, who is credited with preventing a Communist takeover of the French labor movement after World War II, for everything wrong in France. Decades later, Brauman came to believe that Brown had saved France from totalitarianism.

Médecins Sans Frontières deserved the Nobel Prize for its humanitarian work alone. But because it dared to speak the truth about the political origins of human suffering, it made an additional, essential contribution to the peoples of the Third World by hastening the demise of a system that was responsible for many of the century's bloodiest atrocities. In 1999, those responsible for the Nobel award made a choice that was not only laudable, but actually inspired. ♦



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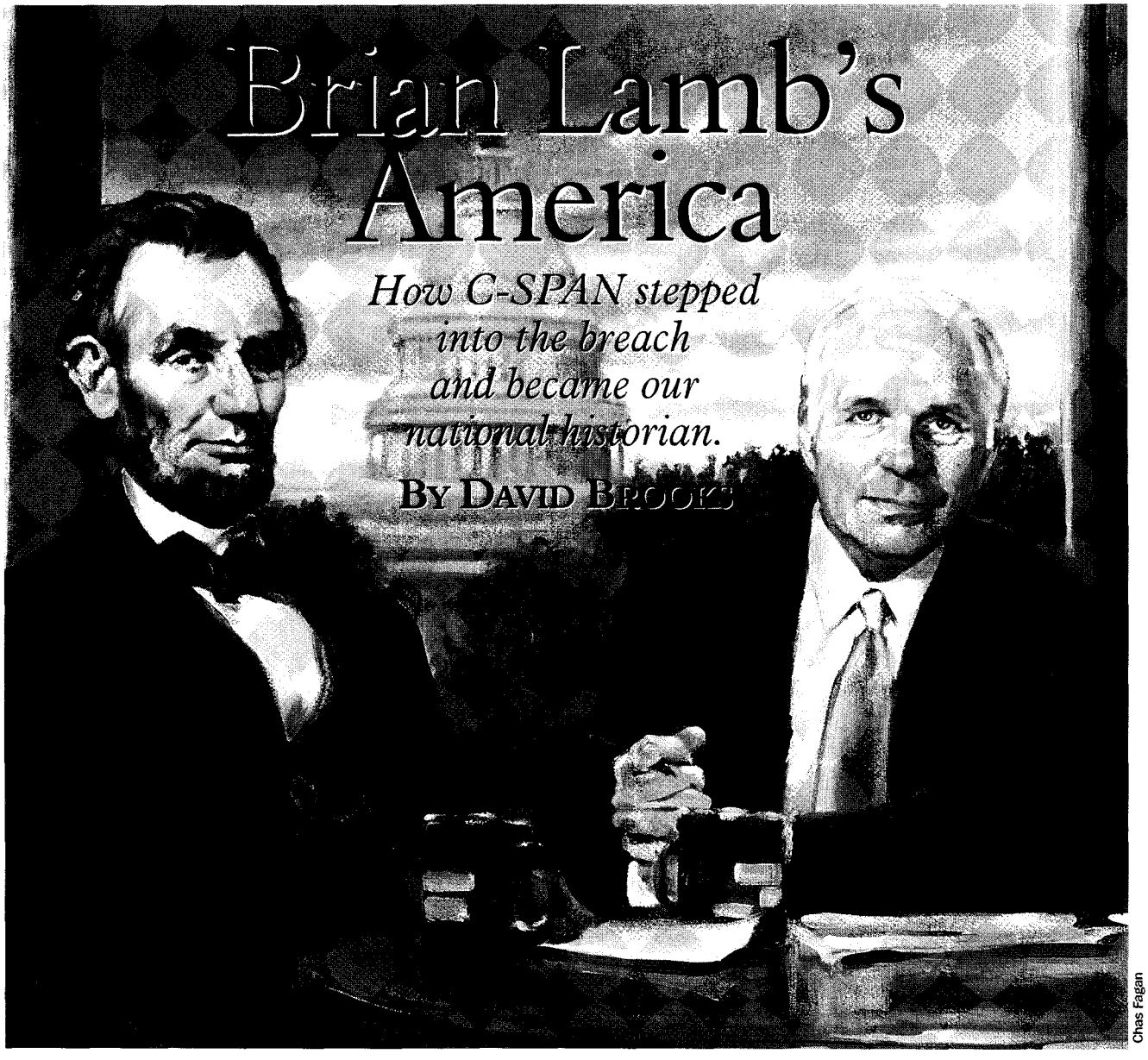
# Brian Lamb's America

*How C-SPAN stepped into the breach and became our national historian.*

BY DAVID BROOKS



Chas Fagan

The quintessential C-SPAN moment came during a *Booknotes* program in 1991, while host Brian Lamb was interviewing Martin Gilbert, the author of a biography of Winston Churchill. Gilbert was talking about the interplay between private scandal and public life when the following exchange took place:

GILBERT: *When Churchill was 20 and a young soldier, he was accused of buggery, and, you know, that's, you know, a terrible accusation. Well, he ended up prime minister for just quite a long time.*
LAMB: *Why was he accused of buggery and what is it?*
GILBERT: *You don't know what buggery is?*
LAMB: *Define it, please.*
GILBERT: *Oh dear. Well, I—I'm sorry. I thought the word we—buggery is what used to be called a—the—an unnatural act of the Oscar Wilde type is how it was actually phrased in the euphemism of the British papers. It's—you don't know what buggery is?*

Over the twenty years that C-SPAN has been in existence, its founder Brian Lamb and his colleagues have pioneered a distinct interviewing style. The questions are flat, short, and direct. And they are centered around facts. The guests might be longwinded or erudite or both, but usually what sets them off is some six-word question about a specific fact. You get the impression that if Brian Lamb were called in to interview Jesus the first questions out of his mouth would be: "It's said you fed the multitudes with loaves and fish. What kind of fish was that? How many people does it take to make up a multitude?"

*David Brooks is a senior editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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It seems like such an easy thing to ask direct questions about simple facts. But when you zap up and down the TV dial, you notice that few of the other talk shows do it. The broadcast network interviewers ask mostly about emotions and feelings. On many of the cable talk shows, the host is the star so the questions are really rococo essays that render the answers superfluous. And when you cast your eye out to the broader culture, you see even more that curiosity about simple facts has been submerged amidst the more sophisticated interest in theory and perceptions.

In Edmund Morris's notorious biography *Dutch*, the facts of what Ronald Reagan did and knew are upstaged by the drama of the author's own quest to "understand" and "capture" his subject. And that is just the tip of the postmodern iceberg. Despite the efforts of E.D. Hirsch and other cheerleaders for fact-based "cultural literacy," school curricula no longer focus on the simple whats, wheres, and whens of history. University historians are even less interested in that stuff—obsessed as they are with social forces and group consciousness. Even in a publicly funded showcase institution like the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the displays are concerned less with illuminating historical events or history-making individuals than with lionizing aggrieved groups.

*C-SPAN has become an intellectual counterculture. It is factual in a world grown theoretical, slow in an age growing more hyper.*

Indeed, when you step back far enough you begin to appreciate that C-SPAN is so far out of tune with the times that it has become an intellectual counterculture. Especially on the weekends, the people who fill its screens seem quaintly and bravely out of step: the historian who has devoted her career to researching Pickett's Charge, the auctioneer who specializes in rare 18th-century books, the biographer who has spent years describing John Adams.

C-SPAN is factual in a world grown theoretical. It is slow in a world growing more hyper. It is word-oriented in an era that is visually sophisticated. With its open phone lines, it is genuinely populist in a culture that preaches populism more than it practices it. And occupying its unique niche—C-SPAN is funded by the cable industry to cover Congress and public events—it has managed to perform feats of civic education that are unmatched by better-funded institutions, such as the History Channel, PBS, the Smithsonian, or the multi-billion-dollar foundations.

This year C-SPAN is running a series called *The American Presidents*. The network dedicates a few hours of programming each week to describing the life and times of one of our nation's 41 chief executives, starting with George Washington last March and ending with Bill Clinton on Christmas Eve. Again, the approach is breathtakingly simple. C-SPAN sends two camera crews out to the president's home or some significant site associated with his life. The Washington segment was filmed at Mount Vernon. A William Henry Harrison segment was filmed at the battlefield at Tippecanoe in Indiana, where Harrison fought the Indians in 1811. There is a park ranger or local historian to give a tour of the site, usually with a few of those homey anecdotes that are the weakness of historic-home tour guides. There is a short documentary that describes the basic course of each president's life. That is often followed by an interview with a descendant of the president in question (George Cleveland played his grandfather Grover). With the more recent presidents, there is footage from important moments of their presidencies. Franklin Roosevelt's first inaugural address was broadcast during the week dedicated to his presidency. Finally a few historians are brought in to answer questions from the C-SPAN host and the C-SPAN callers. The callers are often self-taught history buffs—someone will call in with a freakishly expert understanding of, say, the election of 1852—or else people with a personal connection to the president in question.

The programs on the obscure presidents tend to be better than the programs on the famous ones, simply because there is so much new to be learned about the Benjamin Harrisons of the world. The program on Zachary Taylor, for example, provided the usual nuggets. Far from being a child of poverty, as much of the literature about Taylor suggests, he was actually descended from Mayflower stock and had the same great-grandfather as James Madison. His predecessor, James Polk, gave up the presidency on a Saturday, but Taylor refused to take an oath on a Sunday, so there was a day in 1849 when America had no president. Taylor believed the president had the right to veto only bills he thought were unconstitutional, so great was the presumption of legislative branch superiority in his day. Taylor's daughter married Jefferson Davis. Though Taylor and Davis dis-



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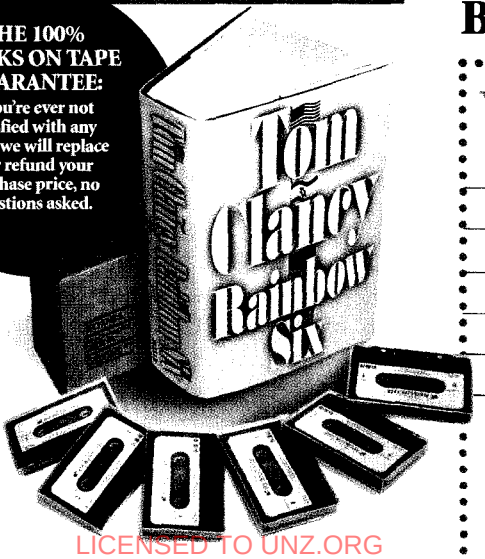


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agreed furiously about secession, the two men remained close friends even after her death. Taylor fought in the frustrating wars against the Seminoles in Georgia and Alabama. At one point he told the Seminoles that if they surrendered and left disputed territories, they could keep the black slaves who had escaped white slavemasters and fled to their camp. Either you find such bits of data interesting or you do not.

The guide through the life of Taylor was an elderly historian named Elbert Smith, who like many of the historians on the programs seems to exist in a world apart from the theoretical fashions of the day. The program gave us a little more than we need to know on the Wilmot Proviso, but it was fascinating when the coroner of Jefferson County, Kentucky, was brought on to describe the exhumation of Taylor's body. A historian named Clara Rising, who also appeared on the program, had come to the conclusion that Taylor was poisoned with arsenic. His body was dug up and his fingernails and bones examined, but no sign of arsenic poisoning was found.

*It's hard for impatient people in an impatient age to understand the pleasures that some feel poring studiously over old documents.*

The Web site for the series (americanpresidents.org) conveys the flavor of the programs, including private letters from each of the presidents. Here's a passage from an unlikely love letter written by normally stiff Woodrow Wilson to Edith Bolling Galt a few months before they were married:

> My precious Darling,
>
> The more we are together the more I love you, the more I need to have you always with me, and the more inadequate written words become to speak my heart to you—the more impatient I grow of the pen, the more eager to whisper the love that floods my heart into my Darling's lips as I hold her close in my arms. And yet the more necessary does it become to relieve my heart with some message of love, even if it be only written. Please go to ride with us this evening, precious little girl, so that I can whisper something in your ear—something of my happiness and love.

The descriptions of the presidents on the programs are haphazard, and the information conveyed is out of chronological order—it all depends on the questions from the C-SPAN host or the callers. But in many ways the best part of the series is not the specific treatment of the presidents. It is the sight of all the historians. Some are eminent, like David McCullough, Robert Remini, or Joseph Ellis, but most are not. They are from obscure colleges, or they eke out a living by writing. What they share is a love of history. The producers have done an outstanding job of choosing historians who seem genuinely curious about the past, rather than merely activists or agitators in historian's clothing. Nobody is going to get rich or famous writing a book about, say, Grover Cleveland, or even Andrew Johnson. Nonetheless, there are still people out there who are willing to dedicate their professional lives to understanding some long ago man or period. Many of the best teachers on the series are not even academics. They are the local directors of the historic sites or the buffs who became interested in, say, Warren Harding because they happened to live near his home and adopted him out of local pride. C-SPAN has managed to find such people all over the country, and many more call in with questions.

It's hard for impatient people in an impatient age to understand the pleasures that some people feel poring studiously over old documents. The political theorist William Dunning said that one of the happiest days of his life was the day he discovered, by comparing handwriting samples, that Andrew Johnson's first message to Congress was actually written by George Bancroft. Dunning wrote to his wife, "I don't believe you can form any idea of the pleasure it gives me to have discovered this little historical fact."

One of the best efforts to put this peculiar passion into words comes from the great British historian G.M. Trevelyan (like the Dunning anecdote, it's found in a Gertrude Himmelfarb essay in a new book called *Reconstructing History*). Trevelyan wrote:

> The appeal of history to us all is in the last analysis poetic. But the poetry of history does not consist of imagination roaming at large, but of imagination pursuing the fact and fastening upon it. That which compels the historian to 'scorn delights and live laborious days' is the ardor of his own curiosity to know what really happened long ago in that land of mystery which we call the past.

It's no accident that on a recent C-SPAN program both Jefferson biographer Joseph Ellis and Lincoln biographer David Herbert Donald confessed they were frustrated novelists. Ellis went on to note that none of the reviewers of his Jefferson biography, *American Sphinx*, noted the literary device of which he was most proud. He wanted to convey a certain image of his subject, so in



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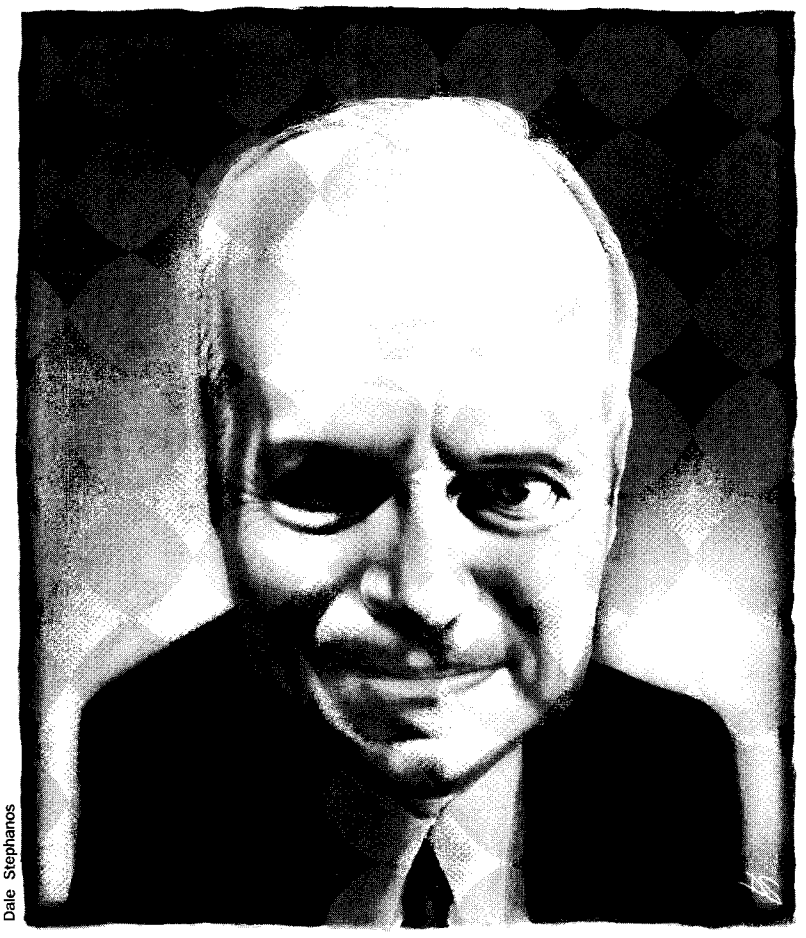

Dale Stephanos

every chapter Jefferson is described entering the scene on horseback.

By contrast, turn to the Web site of the *American Historical Review* (indiana.edu/~ahr) and look at the list of articles the prestigious academic review is publishing or about to publish: "Feminism, Social Science and the Meaning of Modernity"; "The Sensibility of Comfort"; "Culture, Power and Place: The New Landscape of East Asian Regionalism"; "Domesticity and Difference: Male Breadwinners, Working Women and Colonial Citizenship in the 1945 Nigerian General Strike." The list goes on, a stifling progression of abstruse tedium. A few of the topics might sound interesting—"The Sensibility of Comfort" strikes my fancy—until you remember that most academic historians face professional pressures to write as turgidly as possible, and to excise or exile to the footnotes any of the interesting anecdotes they would use as dinner table conversation. The contrast between the C-SPAN historians and the academic establishment historians is breathtaking.

And it's important to remember that the academics took this turn intentionally. The great postmodern hero Michel Foucault mocked what you might call the ethos of the C-SPAN historian: "To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth . . . to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can only answer with a philosophical laugh—which means, to a certain extent, a silent one."

Not silent enough.

Talking to Brian Lamb about *The American Presidents*, you are struck by how much he loves the callers. They make the shows spontaneous, he says. They reflect the many different currents in America. They take control of the programs in ways that no one can foresee.

For example, callers have continually forced the historians to deal with racial matters, so that race has become the major subtheme of the series. The presidents who owned slaves or who tolerated slavery are castigated, and the historians often struggle to suggest that viewers shouldn't rush to impose modern standards on earlier times—with little success.

Lamb is that rarest of creatures, a genuine populist. Many people will think he goes a little overboard in this direction. The callers are often self-absorbed, cranky, or pedantic. They disrupt the story the historians are trying to tell, and make the programs more boring and annoying than they need to be. But you've got to cast your lot somewhere. And if the academic establishment, with all its theoretical gasbaggery, is not going to teach history, then the people who will carry on telling the stories of the past will be untrained history buffs and popular historians, detached from the academy and armed merely with the normal human curiosity to know and understand what went on before us.

The success of C-SPAN's history series reminds us that when one institution in American life stagnates and ceases to fulfill its function—in this case academic history—then a new institution will inevitably arise to fill the need. C-SPAN may be a harbinger of the sort of new educational structures that arise when the universities retreat into themselves and play an ever-diminishing role in national life. ♦



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# Money Can't Buy You Love

*Over the last four years, Steve Forbes has spent $60 million running for president. He's at 4 percent in the polls. What gives?*

**By Tucker Carlson**

At the end of September, the various candidates running for president released their financial statements. Beneath the minutiae was a striking fact: So far this year, Steve Forbes and George W. Bush have spent roughly the same amount of money, about $20 million. But that number alone doesn't tell the most interesting story. Forbes has been running for president more or less continuously since the fall of 1995. Since then he has spent—depending on how you count it—anywhere from $60 to $75 million. The vast majority has been his own money—money that Forbes, rich as he is, didn't have sitting in his checking account. An investigation by the *New York Times* found that Forbes has relatively few liquid assets, and that in order to finance his career in politics he has had to sell off part of his stake in his family-owned company. After four years of campaigning, Steve Forbes is no longer the majority shareholder of Forbes Inc.

What has Forbes received in return? In mid-October, *USA Today* released the results of a poll that asked Republicans who they planned to vote for in 2000. George W. Bush had by far the most support, 60 percent. John McCain had 8 percent. Steve Forbes came in at a mere 4 percent, in a statistical dead heat with Alan Keyes and Orrin Hatch.

For Forbes, politics has been an expensive hobby. Except, as has become abundantly clear, Forbes doesn't consider it a hobby. In contrast to Hatch and Keyes, Forbes isn't running on a lark or as a form of protest. He's not attempting to prove a point, or make a statement, or drive up his speaking fees after the election. Steve Forbes is running for president so he can become president. That's the only reason. And perhaps the strangest reason.

You get the sense that Forbes isn't kidding the moment you walk into his campaign headquarters in Northern Virginia. The first thing you notice about the place is how different it is from Forbes's former, real-life office in New York. The *Forbes* magazine building in Manhattan, where Forbes spent his professional life until the last election, is grand but surprisingly homey. Though the company maintains a large display of rare documents and Fabergé eggs on the first floor, there are no obvious security cameras or armed guards. The bathrooms off the lobby are wood-paneled, unlocked and open to the public. When he ran the magazine, Forbes routinely walked down to the reception desk himself to escort visitors back to his office. In person, he was charming in a self-deprecating way. He laughed and grinned and giggled a lot, often at himself. He talked enthusiastically about baseball. He returned his own phone calls without the usual "please-hold-for-Mr.-Forbes" power displays. He had a funny haircut. He did not, in short, seem like the kind of guy who would blow his family fortune ego-tripping through a midlife crisis.

His campaign headquarters, on the other hand, looks like something designed by Ross Perot. A humorless uniformed guard with a buzz cut sits at a table outside the door taking names and handing out electronic passes, which visitors are instructed to wear around their necks. ("Sign your name," demands the guard, thrusting forward a log book; "do not initial.") Inside, the campaign office—which takes up an entire floor of a sizable building, leased until November 2000—seems more like a large corporation than the headquarters of a third-tier candidate. There are divisions upon divisions, with weirdly bureaucratic labels: "Office of Coalitions," "Political Ops.," "Polling Division," "Budgeting," "Ballot Operations," "Legal Office," "Finance," "Candidate

*Tucker Carlson is a staff writer at* The Weekly Standard.



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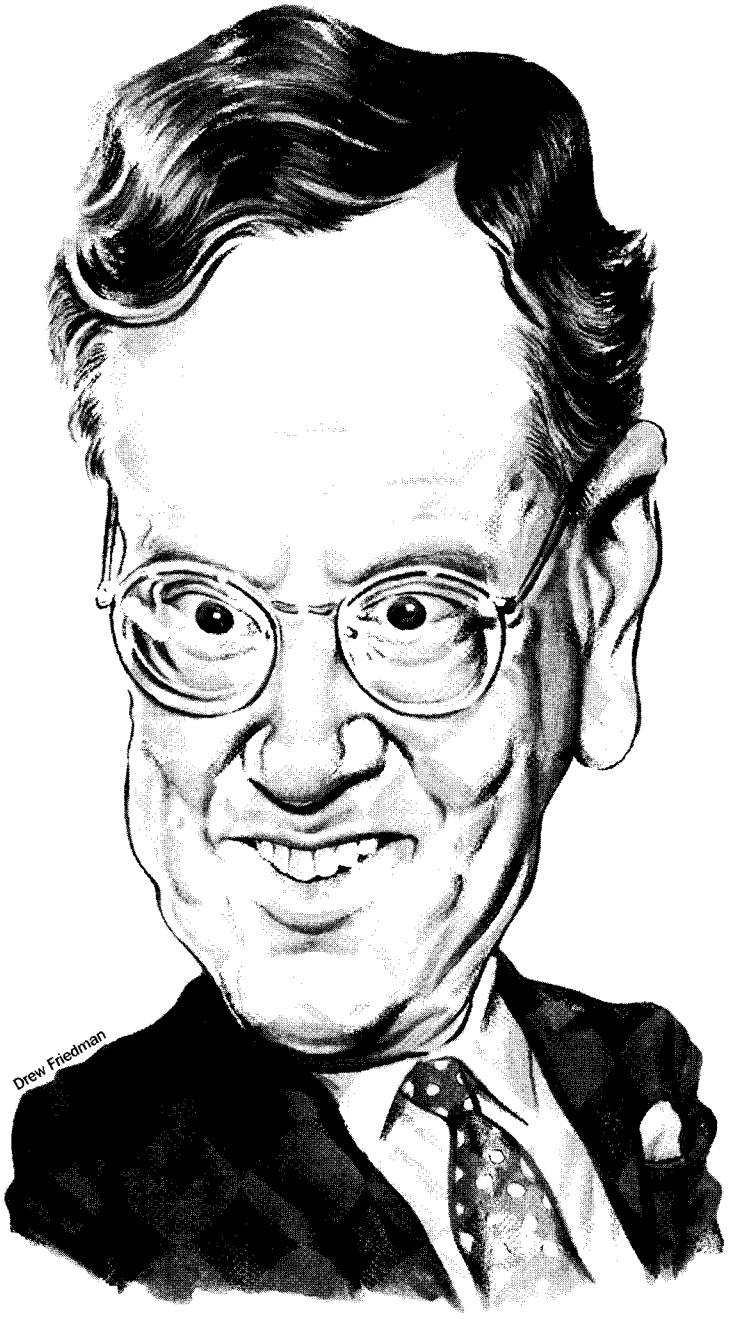


Operations." (It's difficult to imagine that the Keyes campaign has a similar organizational chart.) On the walls are dozens, maybe hundreds, of pictures of Steve Forbes.

Then there is the staff. Forbes 2000 may be doomed, but no one seems to have told the people who work there. Forbes spokesmen churn out an amazing amount of propaganda, much of it about as subtle as a head injury. The campaign is famous for badgering television news producers ("I get to work and I've already got three messages from them on my machine," sighs one) as well as for the relentlessly pedantic, overbearing spin. The morning after Forbes gave a notably mediocre performance in a New Hampshire forum with other second-string GOP candidates, campaign flack Keith Appell sent an e-mail to reporters clumsily declaring victory. "The inaugural debate of campaign 2000 showed why Steve Forbes is going to win," Appell wrote in a message dripping with the campaign's signature irony-free fervor. "The big loser: George Bush."

Laughably ineffective as this is, there is nothing cut-rate or unprofessional about most of Forbes's staff. In 1995, Forbes hired campaign manager Bill DalCol, who has subsequently brought on a number of well-regarded Republican campaign operatives, many with experience in previous presidential races: former Buchanan strategist Greg Mueller to oversee communications, Reagan-Bush veteran Rick Ahearn to head the advance office, longtime New York pollster John McLaughlin to do surveys, and Gary Maloney, a notoriously hardball opposition researcher, to dig up damaging stories about George W. Bush. As of last week, Forbes 2000 had 12 campaign offices around the country, staffed by 113 full-time employees, not including consultants and paid advisers.

All of them seem to be working hard, though none harder than the candidate himself. In contrast to Ross Perot, who spent wildly but rarely left his compound in Dallas, Forbes has hit the campaign trail like a man half his age and five tax brackets poorer. He happily accepts any and all offers to talk to reporters. (For this story, Forbes called me back, personally, four times.) His staff estimates he has done 3,500 interviews since the latest campaign began. He tapes a daily radio commentary, gives speeches constantly, spends virtually his entire life on buses and commercial airplanes (he no longer has his own). Since early spring he has traveled to more than 40 states. In the first three weeks of October alone, Forbes made campaign appearances in Wyoming, New Jersey, Missouri, Louisiana, Washington, South Carolina, Seattle, Atlanta, Delaware, California, Alabama, and London. He made three separate trips to Iowa and two to New Hampshire. At one point he flew from England to an event in California in the space of a single day.

Forbes admits that he hasn't taken a day off since sometime in August (he can't seem to remember exactly when) and doesn't plan to again until Thanksgiving, but claims he isn't exhausted or even particularly tired. Bill DalCol, who oversees his schedule, doesn't seem to care if he is. "He understands the mission at hand," DalCol says with no hint of a smile. "He only has to keep it up through April or May."

The question is, Why would he want to? Despite his best efforts, his campaign seems to be going nowhere at great expense. Why not hang it up now and with dignity,



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take early retirement to a private island and spend the next 30 years sipping fruity cocktails and making targeted campaign donations? Or, better yet, why not use what has become a formidable campaign organization to run for and win the open Senate seat in New Jersey? Forbes won't even dignify the question with an answer. "The Bush people have been fanning that for weeks," he says. "My feeling is that if Hillary can run in New York, I'd be very supportive if Governor Bush was to run in New Jersey." Forbes has delivered the line countless times, but he still snorts with what sounds like genuine laughter as he says it.

His staff, however, doesn't see the humor. Ask why Forbes is still in the race and you'll get blank stares followed by a patient lecture explaining that everything is going precisely according to plan, down to the 4 percent *USA Today* poll. "We're right where we need to be," says DalCol. "I don't know that we'd want to be in any stronger position right now." That's right, says Greg Mueller. "The campaign, we feel, is in a very good position."

*Ask why Forbes is still in the race and you'll get a patient lecture explaining that everything is going according to plan.*

How can smart people say things like this? For starters, the Forbes people dismiss national polls as meaningless in a Republican primary. "Who's actually pulling the levers?" asks Mueller. "It's not the people reflected in *Newsweek* polls." Rather, they claim (with some justification), that the only people who matter in a primary are the Republican faithful, the fabled Base, who for the most part are conservatives. And conservatives prefer Forbes—who, since the implosion of the Quayle, Buchanan, and Bob Smith campaigns, is the only true conservative left in the race.

That's the idea. Never mind that it ignores the existence of Gary Bauer, another true conservative whose presence poses a real threat to Forbes's performance in the Iowa caucus. (In public, Forbes staffers pretend to be not quite sure who Bauer is. John McCain, meanwhile, is written off as moderate and therefore irrelevant to the strategy.) The real problem with the Forbes scenario is that it ends there. Forbes strategists can go on for hours about the weaknesses of the Bush campaign—too liberal, wildly bloated, insufferably arrogant, etc., etc.—but ask them how, exactly, their candidate is going to win the nomination and they become notably inarticulate.

They are particularly vague when it comes to individual primaries. All point out that in past elections underdogs have frequently done better than expected, while a long lists of front-runners have crashed and burned. Pollster John McLaughlin likes to remind reporters that in the fall of 1979, Sen. Ted Kennedy was far and away the favorite in the 1980 election, beating Ronald Reagan in surveys by two to one. Others resurrect the memory of Pat Buchanan, who months before the 1996 New Hampshire primary was trailing Bob Dole by 40 points. Buchanan, of course, wound up winning.

You might assume that the moral of the story is that Steve Forbes has a real chance to take New Hampshire. But no. Forbes staffers don't seem to expect a victory there. Or, for that matter, in Iowa, the state where Forbes has spent the most time and money. In fact, it's not clear what state the Forbes campaign expects to win. At first, Bill DalCol seems to suggest a Bush rout will come early. "We've got to take Bush out within the first eight," he says. Asked how and where this will take place, DalCol hedges. "It would be helpful if we won one," he explains. Forbes himself indicates that losing the first eight primaries would not necessarily be enough to force him from the race. "It depends on the circumstances at the time," he says.

After a while it becomes clear that Forbes plans to stay in the race for a long, long time, regardless of how he fares in the early primaries. And, in fact, staying in for a long time is at the heart of what passes for his strategy. Even if Forbes were to lose eight primaries in a row, even if John McCain were to win New Hampshire, thereby becoming the undisputed alternative to Bush, the Forbes people argue that their candidate would still be the only credible challenger, simply because he has the most money. And once everyone but Bush drops out for lack of cash, Forbes will still have the reserves to hammer the front-runner with negative ads (or "engage him with our message," as Greg Mueller puts it) and ultimately topple him.

Just about every political professional outside the Forbes campaign regards this scenario as borderline crackpot. In fact, early victories are crucial. In 1996, Forbes's surprisingly poor showing in Iowa (he was expected to place second; he came in fourth) cost him 10 points in New Hampshire overnight. He never recovered. Forbes strategists don't seem to understand that if McCain (or, for that matter, Bauer) actually won an upset victory in an early primary state, his fund-raising would jump accordingly. More important even, an upset winner



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gets so much free media attention, it can catapult him ahead in other states. Winning primaries, in other words, is the only way to win primaries. Which one do the Forbes people think he can win? If they have one in mind, it's a closely held secret.

Instead of victories, they would rather talk about money, a subject on which Forbes and his staff appear to have bought their own spin. "He's Lamar with money," says Steve Schmidt, who, as the former communications director of Alexander 2000, ought to know. "Steve Forbes is not going to be president of the United States," declares James Carville, a connoisseur (despite his partisan hackery on television) of strategy and technical skill in politics. "I think you or I would have a better chance of winning. I know of no other political person—Republican or Democrat—who doesn't agree with me."

The Forbes campaign, of course, doesn't agree. Bill DalCol dismisses doubts about Forbes as a symptom of insular, inside-the-Beltway thinking. Or of something more sinister. The national media, DalCol says, are members of the same "club"—a club from which Steve Forbes, as an outsider, is excluded. "A lot of these [reporters] socialize with the establishment players," DalCol explains. "The establishment players are all with Bush." Moreover, he says, Forbes is a magazine publisher. If you're a journalist, "who is the enemy? The publisher, the company. He happens to come out of the publishing industry. That's something we have to overcome."

It's easy to mock conspiracy theories like this. But they have been of great use to the Forbes campaign. For one thing, they allow Forbes's staff to ignore the biting coverage their boss often receives. And they allow Forbes himself to continue his bid for the presidency unhampered by doubts that perhaps the critics are right. All of which may explain why Forbes, at 4 percent in national polls, sometimes behaves like the front-runner.

For instance, when he issues slightly pompous statements on matters of concern to the International Community (the earthquake in Turkey, the civil rights of Catholics in Northern Ireland). Or when he faxes out press releases about subjects so trivial that it's hard to believe a human being actually sat down and typed them out ("FBI Veteran Named Forbes Security Director"). Or when, as he does every day, he acts as if at some point soon he will be president of the United States. ♦


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**Senator Mitch McConnell, questioning I. Michael Heyman, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, at a hearing on the Smithsonian's budget:**

"I am confident that you are familiar with an article from the June 7 edition of THE WEEKLY STANDARD entitled 'The National Museum of Multiculturalism.' [After reading it] I spent the better part of a morning walking around the museum myself. . . . I want you to know that the article did generate a good deal of discussion among a number of Senators."

*—Transcript of Senate Rules Committee Hearing, July 28, 1999*

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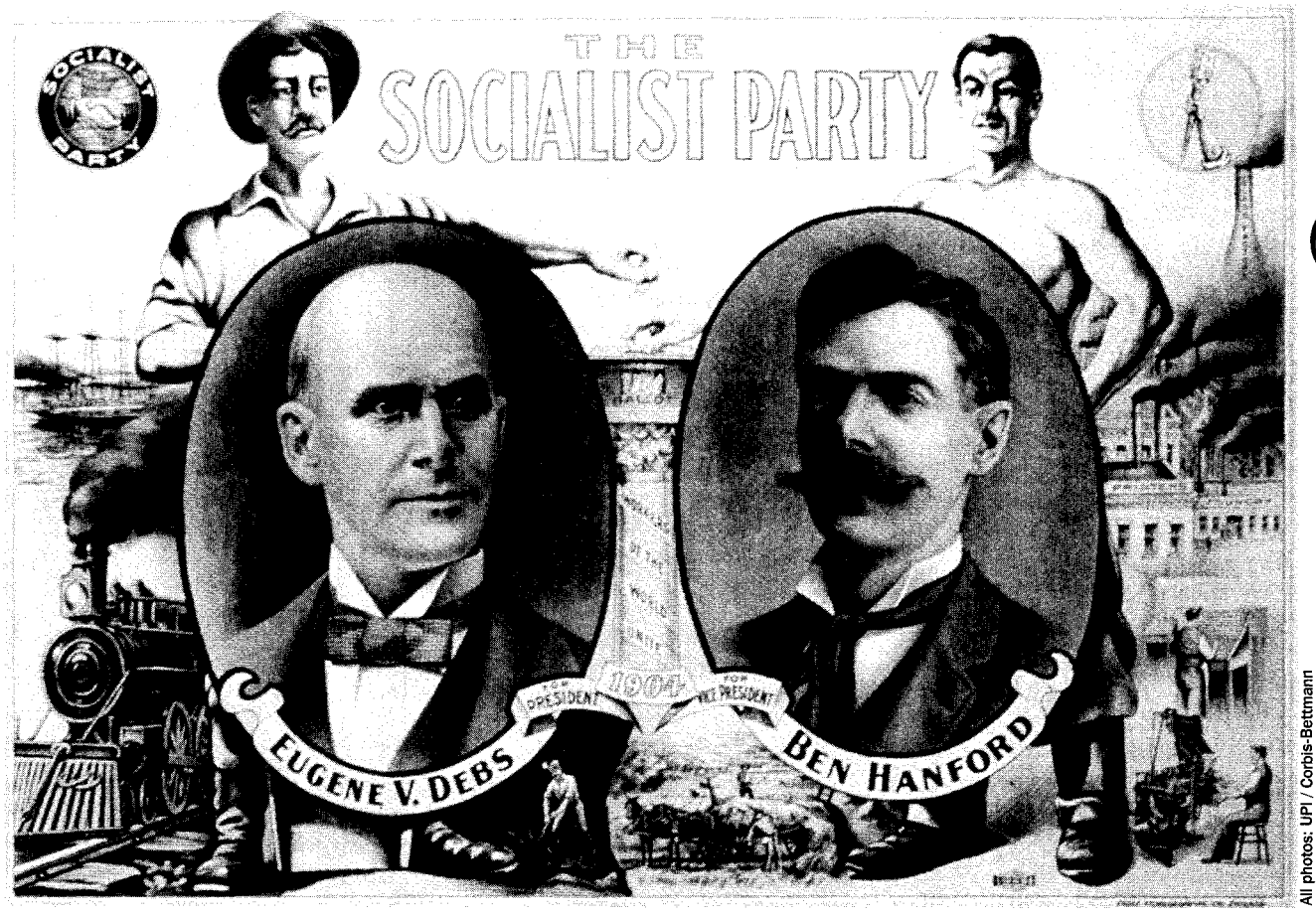


All photos: UPI / Corbis-Bettmann

# Getting a Leftist Right

## *The Life and Times of Eugene Debs*

by DAVID KUSNET

Back in 1950, the nation's largest corporation and the leading industrial union signed a contract that set the pattern for labor peace and widespread prosperity in postwar America. General Motors agreed to substantial wage increases, plus cost-of-living adjustments and improved health and pension benefits for its blue-collar workers. In return, the United Auto Workers accepted GM's authority over production standards, work schedules, and job assignments.

*David Kusnet, former chief speechwriter for President Clinton, is a visiting fellow at the Economic Policy Institute and the author of* Speaking American: How the Democrats Can Win in the Nineties.

In a historical irony, both architects of this "treaty of Detroit" had been youthful supporters of the American Socialist leader Eugene Victor Debs. Few who knew the UAW president, Walter Reuther, would have been surprised that, when he was only eleven, his father had taken him to visit Debs in the federal prison to which he had been sentenced for sedition for opposing World War I. But Reuther's adversary across the bargaining table, GM president Charles Wilson, also bragged that in 1912, as a twenty-two-year-old laborer, he had voted for Debs for president. That admission was remarkable, coming from a rock-ribbed Republican who later served as President Eisenhower's secretary of defense.

**Harp Song for a Radical**
*The Life and Times of Eugene Victor Debs*
by Marguerite Young
Knopf, 599 pp., $35

Debs's ability to appeal to Americans ranging from Walter Reuther to "Engine Charlie" Wilson testifies to his unique place in history. Debs virtually invented industrial unions like the UAW, which represent wage-earners in most jobs throughout a company. And, from collective bargaining to Social Security, the minimum wage, and workers' compensation, many of the programs that became the pillars of New Deal America were first proposed in the platforms of Debs's Socialist party.



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Yet, if Debs is remembered at all today, it is more as a battler against social injustice than a builder of social institutions. The image of him that lingers is of an Old Testament prophet—or even the Christ figure some of Debs's followers proclaimed him to be: balding, gaunt, his long arms reaching towards the heavens, as he railed against domestic inequities and foreign wars.

Debs's twin legacies—radical protest and pragmatic reform—have rarely been explored. But his historic contributions exemplify what's best about American democracy: its unique capacity to adapt ideas and assimilate institutions that originate in worthy and widespread discontents. And, properly understood, Debs should rank as a national hero similar to Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, belonging to Americans of every viewpoint.

But in recent months, almost a hundred years after his first presidential campaign, the man who should be an American icon has become the subject of a bizarre biography that threatens to move him from the mainstream to the margins. The book is *Harp Song for a Radical: The Life and Times of Eugene Victor Debs* by Marguerite Young, and its publicity materials present it as "an extraordinary publishing event." But if there is anything "extraordinary" about *Harp Song*—a rambling treatment of social injustice in nineteenth-century America and the fringe movements that opposed it, with Debs himself appearing only intermittently—it is that such an incoherent and interminable book was published at all.

Young spent the last thirty years of her life researching and writing *Harp Song*, completing some 2,500 pages before she died in 1995 at the age of eighty-seven. Her friend, the author and translator Charles Ruas, edited the manuscript into a 599-page work.

But he didn't edit it enough. Most sentences resemble this one, which announces Debs's birth on page 184:

> The date when Eugene Debs was born in the backroom of the little grocery store, which had a scale upon which to weigh him was November 5, 1855—and who could have foreseen that this newly arrived son who had been a long time coming would become the founder of many locomotive railroad unions and other unions and ultimately a founder of the Socialist Party of America, as he would also be the perpetual presidential candidate for that which was presumably the highest office in the United States and running slowly with no expectation of winning even so much as by a majority of one?

Debs then leaves center stage, while *Harp Song* returns to the Utopian Socialists, the Mormons, the Dred Scott case, Wendell Phillips, Mary Todd Lincoln, Joseph Pulitzer, and Dostoyevsky before suddenly screeching to a halt. It concludes before Debs's leadership of the Pullman Strike of 1895 and his five presidential campaigns—in short, everything that earned him his reputation. The book ends not with Debs's imprisonment in Illinois but with Dostoyevsky's incarceration in Siberia.

*Debs campaigns from prison, 1920.*

To be fair, there are flashes of vivid writing and even brilliant insight. Young writes of Debs's wife, Kate: "The time would come when she would almost feel that she was married to a train whistle and not to a man." And she speculates about why the liberal Woodrow Wilson, who failed to win American support for the League of Nations, persecuted Debs: "Wilson wanted Debs, with his smashed utopian dreams, to suffer as he suffered in what seemed an increasingly doomed search for his vision of utopia."

But Young was simply the wrong writer to re-introduce Debs to today's Americans. While she, like Debs, was an Indiana native, she spent most of her years in New York, where her world revolved around the literati of Washington Square, not the leftists and laborites of Union Square. Described as a "Greenwich Village eccentric," Young befriended Truman Capote and Carson McCullers and participated in protests against the war in Vietnam. It was at one of these marches, she told Ruas, that she decided to write a book about Debs, presenting him as a link between the Utopian Socialists of the early nineteenth century and the peace movement and counterculture of the 1960s.

This mistakes the meaning of Debs's life—for his greatest strengths were his roots in mainstream America. Unlike many radicals from his time to our own, Debs was steeped in traditional values—from Jeffersonian democracy to evangelical Christianity. Radicalized only when the emerging urban, industrial society fell short of the standards he had learned growing up in small-town America, Debs was remarkably effective at communicating with others who shared his disillusionment with economic injustices, social breakdown, and political corruption. His lasting impact was the development of institutions, from the industrial unions to social insurance programs for wage-earners and their families. And, to this day, he offers a model of radicalism without rancor that addresses Americans in eras of social and economic dislocation by appealing to their beliefs, not their bitterness.

Though it distorts Debs, *Harp Song*'s merit may be that it leads a new generation of readers to the best biographies of Debs, both of which show how utterly American he was. Written shortly after the New Deal, at a time when labor liberals had every reason to be hopeful,



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Ray Ginger's *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs* implicitly presented him as a forerunner of a growing labor movement and an expanding welfare state. Much more timely is the labor historian Nick Salvatore's biography, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*. Written in the early 1980s, Salvatore's book explains why a radical from the early industrial age still speaks to Americans in the information age.

*Debs rouses the crowd at a Milwaukee Socialist picnic, 1925. Inset: Just before his death in 1926.*

Like many other leaders of successful social movements, Debs was a middle American through and through. Long after he became a national figure, he still came home to his native Terre Haute, which, in Debs's youth, boasted clean government, civic-minded business people, and a vibrant community life. For Debs, this beloved town remained the model for the society he wanted to create, where every citizen would enjoy a measure of respect and a voice in decisions.

The son of a grocery-store owner, Debs took a job as a railroad fireman, a sensible decision since, as Salvatore writes, "Skilled railroad workers—the engineers, firemen, and conductors who went over the road and the carpenters, mechanics, and painters who remained in the railroad shops—were among the most respected and highly paid workers in America during the 1870s and 1880s." Like many other small-town Americans, Debs was a joiner, so he signed up in his co-workers' craft union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. A gifted organizer and orator, Debs worked his way up, from secretary of the Terre Haute lodge to secretary-treasurer (in effect, the chief operating officer) of the national union.

Railway workers were responsible for the passengers' safety, and railway brotherhoods like the Firemen made sure their members learned their crafts and behaved responsibly. Indeed, such unions functioned more as moral stewards than as shop stewards. Not surprisingly, Young, the radical bohemian, ignores the union's social conservatism, and, in a brief reference to the union Debs served for almost twenty years, she writes that its motto was "Benevolence, Society, and Industry." In fact, its motto was "Benevolence, Sobriety, and Industry." And, while Debs enjoyed a drink as much as the next man, he once filed charges against a fellow member for drunkenness on the job.

Such actions underscore how conventional a civic leader Debs still was. And, during his twenties and thirties, he was elected city clerk and state legislator, eventually serving as the Indiana Democratic party's chief spokesman on labor issues. Terre Haute's city fathers foresaw a bright future for Debs—mayor, congressman, or even president.

But his secure world of civic leadership, craft unionism, and Democratic politics was swept away by the corporate consolidations and financial panics of the 1880s and 1890s. Ever more powerful, the railway companies kept cutting workers' wages and jobs, including the skilled craftsmen who once were well paid and well regarded. Ever the egalitarian, Debs called for a new industrial union for railway workers that would combine the strength of all the craft unions and counter the power of the railway companies. Founding the American Railway Union, he won a strike against Great Northern Railroad in 1894, but was drawn into a futile struggle against the mighty Pullman Company in 1895. He found himself up against the combined power of the nation's corporate giants and the conservative Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland, who called out federal troops and won a court injunction against strike activity.

Disobeying the injunction, Debs was sent to federal prison. For the rest of his life, he would say that he was "baptized in socialism" in his prison cell. He soon became a founder and the most prominent leader of the fledgling Socialist party. In 1900—and again in 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920—he campaigned for president, running his final race from the prison cell to which another Democratic president, Woodrow Wilson, had sent him.

These campaigns were essentially speaking tours, and Debs was a great speaker. Always, Debs stressed that his movement must make "its appeal to the American people as the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty and self-government, in which the nation was born." Speaking out against an impersonal industrial system that turned workers into "hands" and a plutocratic political system that robbed them of their citizenship, he urged audiences to assert their "manhood" by organizing in their workplaces and communities. Defining socialism as a "cooperative commonwealth" where



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the rights and responsibilities of citizenship would be broadly shared, he sounded much like Mario Cuomo or Bill Clinton, urging "an equalizing of burdens and benefits throughout the whole society."

Just as remarkable was what Debs didn't say. From the Know-Nothings of the 1850s to Ross Perot and Patrick Buchanan today, many leaders who have harvested the discontents generated by economic transformations and social dislocations have peddled conspiracy theories or pilloried scapegoats. But, in a less enlightened era than our own, Debs refused to join the demagogues who denounced Jewish bankers, black strikebreakers, Chinese immigrants, Irish saloonkeepers, or disloyal German-Americans. Instead, he offered an uplifting radicalism that loved justice and hated nobody.

While he relished dialect humor as a young man, the mature Debs, more than any other national leader of his time, espoused an inclusive concept of American citizenship. Within his Socialist party, he worked with German, Jewish, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants whom the rural Populists and middle class Progressives were unwilling or unable to embrace. While he dogmatically declared that "There is no 'Negro problem' apart from the general labor problem," he also refused to address segregated audiences, condemned lynching and disfranchisement, and, late in life, addressed a meeting of black activists convened by A. Philip Randolph, then a young activist in New York City and later the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and an organizer of the civil rights march on Washington in 1963. He supported women's suffrage as well, and many women held leading positions in his party.

Most of all, he urged ordinary Americans to believe in themselves, declaring: "I would have you understand that within yourselves, there is all that is necessary to develop a real man. So much of what is in you is latent, undeveloped." These words inspired a wave of civic activism by Debs's followers, many of whom were immigrant workers who were effectively "Americanized" by a radical movement. As Salvatore writes, "They took the republican tradition seriously and stressed the individual dignity and power inherent in the concept of citizenship."

Thus, Debs's influence was reflected in the institutions his followers built. In industrial cities such as Bridgeport and Milwaukee, Socialist mayors pioneered a style of municipal government that served working people and the poor while remaining honest and efficient. In immigrant communities, Socialists built mutual aid societies from the Jewish Workmen's Circle to the Slovenian Benefit Society. And, even in Debs's time, Socialists helped build some of the first industrial unions of coal miners, garment workers, and auto workers.

*Curiously, it was in the arena he knew best—unionism—that Debs proved his most dogmatic and least pragmatic.*

Curiously, it was in the arena he knew best—unionism—that Debs was most dogmatic and least pragmatic. Perhaps because the craft unions of the American Federation of Labor reminded him of the exclusive and ineffective railway brotherhoods of his youth, the mature Debs, until the final years of his life, refused to work with the AFL, which, for all its faults, represented the mainstream of the union movement.

Shortly after 1920, the Socialists dwindled and divided over issues ranging from American prosperity to the Russian revolution. His moral compass accurate as ever, Debs shunned the Communists, declaring: "Having no Vatican in Moscow to guide me, I must follow the light I have." Returning to the pragmatism of his youth, Debs joined with the craft unionists of the American Federation of Labor in supporting the Progressive party's presidential candidate, Wisconsin senator Robert LaFollette, in 1924. Had Debs lived longer, he might well have helped build a broader coalition of liberals and labor than the Socialists ever mustered. But two years later, he died at seventy-one, exhausted by years of barnstorming without bed rest (because he continued to boycott the Pullman Company and its sleeper cars).

Debs's own high-water marks as a presidential candidate were the 6 percent of the national total he received in 1912 and the almost one million votes he garnered in 1920. But his greatest contribution was the growth of industrial unions, one decade after his death, and the inclusive America they helped to build.

Today, the word "Debsian" describes an earlier, more optimistic, and uniquely American reform movement. The movement Debs led was also more innocent than ensuing generations of labor liberals, including Reuther and Randolph, could afford to be. At the turn of this century, it was still possible to believe that social problems in this country were entirely rooted in poverty and exploitation. And it was impossible to imagine that, in other countries, movements opposed to the inequities of capitalism would eventually produce even more monstrous injustices of their own. After almost a century's encounter with reality at home and abroad, the labor liberals who are Debs's real heirs are almost invariably more restrained in their criticisms of existing society and their advocacy of social reform.

Still, of all the leaders who have appealed to Americans threatened by social and economic change, Debs was far and away the most decent. And, in his own way, he was also the most effective. From those who oppose trade agreements that ignore workers' rights to those who build trade unions that defend them, today's organizers could choose worse heroes than the railroad fireman from Indiana who spent the last thirty years of his life in a lover's quarrel with America. ♦



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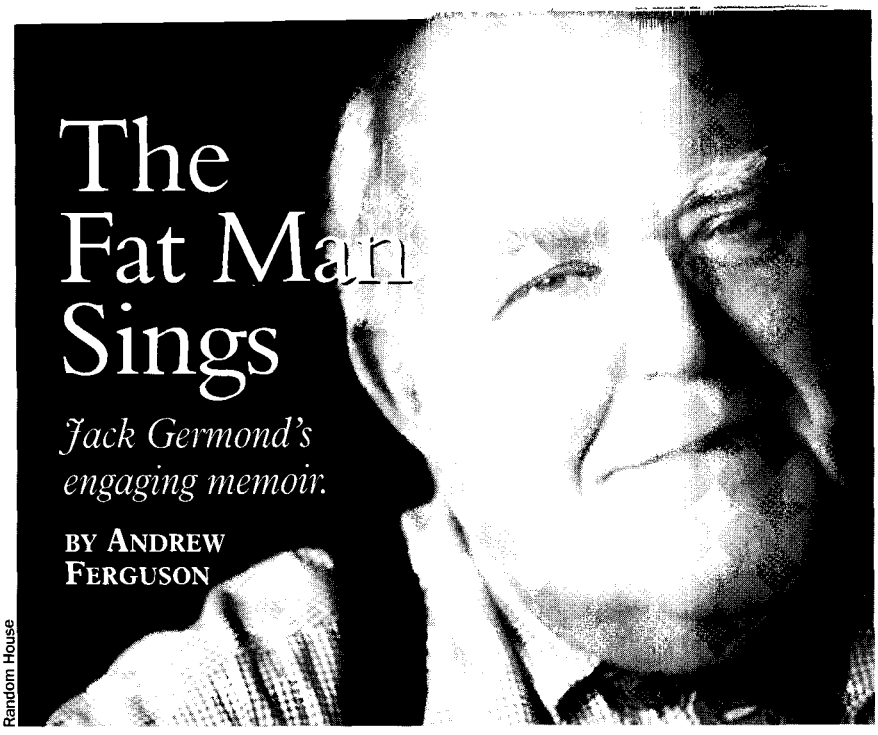

# The Fat Man Sings

*Jack Germond's engaging memoir.*

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Random House

Everyone who reads this marvelous memoir—and it deserves to have many, many readers—will have a favorite anecdote among the countless tales that Jack Germond piles up, so I might as well begin this review with mine.

Germond is best known, of course, for his stint as the house curmudgeon on *The McLaughlin Group*. But as a print reporter he's been covering politics for more than forty years, the last twenty or so with his partner Jules Witcover. Their reporting brought them in frequent contact with George Wallace, who somehow acquired the idea that Witcover is Jewish. Witcover is Roman Catholic, but never mind. Whenever Witcover would drop in on the governor for an interview, Wallace would try to jolly up the alien with some small talk. "I saw old Dave Silverman the other day," Wallace would inevitably begin. What a coincidence! Silverman was a Jewish shopkeeper in downtown Montgomery. "Wallace," Germond writes, "seemed to think all Jews know one another." Over the years, Witcover gave up trying to set Wallace straight, and would simply send his best wishes to old Dave.

And as long as we're on the subject of Wallace, let me pass along one more story (*Fat Man in a Middle Seat* is that kind of book). According to Germond, Wallace had only one interest aside from rousing the rabble, and this was, no surprise, women. One afternoon, Germond was passing the time in a hotel lobby with Wallace's press secretary when an elevator door opened and a blond country singer who warmed up crowds at Wallace campaign rallies bolted out. She marched over to us and plunked herself down with an emphatic flounce of skirts and legs. "That damned George Wallace," she announced. "He didn't even take his shoes off."

**Fat Man in a Middle Seat**
*Forty Years of Covering Politics*
by Jack W. Germond
Random House, 284 pp., $25.95

Wallace may have been a bad guy—Germond certainly thinks he was—but it's also true that they don't make them like him anymore, and as a consequence American politics is a much less entertaining spectacle than it once was. Nowadays national politicians, with one or two exceptions, all seem to have been pulped and pressed and rolled out from the same vat of mush, so that Al Trent Lamar John Gore Lott Alexander Kerry is indistinguishable from Chuck Don Tom Evan Hagel Nickles Harkin Bayh, or any other politician who might aspire to their lofty perch. Even in the subgenus Southern Demagogue, the best that contemporary politics can offer up is David Duke, a creepy little pretty boy so starved for respectability that he's submitted to cosmetic surgery and campaigns with a blow drier in his car. Governor Wallace, needless to say, was a Brylcreem man.

Jack Germond laments the change, not only in the quality of our pols but in the character of the journalists who cover them. Politicians get the reporters they deserve. Germond's generation of hacks, when covering a campaign, followed a rigorous schedule: a long day of reporting, a late afternoon and early evening spent filing the story, then a bloody, carnivorous dinner (napkin spread over the tie) followed by several hours in the hotel bar swapping lies and gossip with colleagues.

No longer. Germond says, generously and perhaps not accurately, that today's generation of political reporters is every bit as skilled as his own. "But their lifestyles are more disciplined. They tend to drink white wine or beer rather than Irish whiskey . . . and a lot of them eat salads from room service, believe it or not." Judging from my own, more limited experience, I do believe it, and the transformation has long been in train. The first time I covered the New Hampshire primary, in 1988, I headed for the legendary bar at the Wayfarer Hotel in Manchester, a neophyte hoping to knock back a few stiff ones with the big dogs after a tough day trailing (if I remember correctly) the electrifying candidacy of Paul Simon. Germond was in the bar, and one or two others, but every one else was in the hotel gym, queuing up for the StairMaster.

Germond is not a convert to the StairMaster, as you may have noticed, but neither is he a sentimentalist posting his memoir as a Valentine to the irretrievable past. The Germond persona, familiar to watchers of *The McLaughlin Group*, doesn't allow for much romantic self-reflection. Worldwise, skeptical, unshockable, he makes for amiable and disarming company. Without apology he announces himself a practitioner of "horse-race journalism"—reporting that dwells on who's winning and who's losing a political race to the exclusion of Deep Thinking About the Issues. The lack of apology is refreshing, since it is currently an article

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of faith among political reporters—who pride themselves on their capacity for self-flagellation—that their reporting is woefully superficial, too obsessed with who's up and who's down, criminally negligent of The Larger Meaning, and so on. To the contrary, says Germond, "I have always argued that newspapers should not have any civic purpose beyond telling readers what is happening. . . . A reporter who doesn't quickly tell readers what they most want to know—the score—won't last long. Better he should teach political science."

So it's no surprise that the great issues of the last forty years make only glancing appearances in *Fat Man in a Middle Seat*. Like so many political reporters, particularly of the "horse-race" variety, Germond began his career with an ambition to cover sports. (Scratch a really good political reporter and most likely you'll find a sports nut: The fascination with winning and losing, with definitive outcomes and numerical data, translates easily from one field to the other.) He quickly tired of it: "There are only so many ways you can report a baseball game." Investigative journalism left him similarly unmoved. "My indignation threshold was too high to sustain me," he writes. "I couldn't get worked up about the mayor getting his driveway paved with public asphalt."

Which left politics. "I loved politics and, I confess, I enjoyed politicians immensely." Some of them he enjoyed more than others, however. Like most liberal reporters, he had a special fondness for liberal (nowadays called "moderate") Republicans: Nelson Rockefeller, Oregon governor Tom McCall, Jacob Javits, and other ideological cross-dressers who were expert in the art of letting Democrats have their way. Predictably enough, he revered Bobby Kennedy and despised Richard Nixon; less predictably, he dislikes Jesse Jackson and Bill Clinton ("the most selfish and egocentric politician I have ever seen"). For reasons he is unable to express, he holds a bitter contempt for George Bush, an awkward and uneven political performer, as Germond notes, but also a superior human being, which Germond misses.

Billed as a memoir, *Fat Man in a Middle Seat* is thus a book about politics, more specifically about the men who practice politics, and it will entrance anyone with an interest in the public life of the past forty years. But it is only incidentally a book about Jack Germond. His silence regarding personal matters is another generational marker. We learn a good deal about his jobs and colleagues in various newsrooms, a bit about his early family life, next to nothing about his first marriage or his second. With his first wife he had two daughters; the elder died of leukemia in the late 1970s. We learn this by-the-by, in a chapter otherwise devoted to Jimmy Carter.

> Mandy's death at fourteen, after five brave years of dealing with her illness with unfailing hope, was, of course, a signal event in my life as well as in that of her mother, Barbara, and her sister, Jessica, who was eleven. The loss of a child causes a pain that has no dimension and cannot be described to those who have not shared the experience. In my case it seemed to reinforce the detachment I felt from things going on around me. Politicians might tell me something was terribly important, but I knew that, whatever it was, it didn't really matter to me.

These dignified and heartbreaking sentences take us as far as we're going to go into Jack Germond's inner life, and we should be grateful, in this day of compulsive self-exposure, for his reticence. And of course the sad story has a small compensation, a lovely twist at once funny and horrifying, altogether characteristic of this hugely enjoyable book. After his daughter's death, many politicians went out of their way to offer sympathy; Germond, after all, was a powerful columnist, with some sway over the course of their careers.

"One of them, a midwestern senator, both called and wrote to express his sympathy at great length. Then, at a dinner two months later, he asked me: 'How's that daughter of yours getting along?'" ♦

# A Director to Remember

*In Leo McCarey's films, small mistakes have big consequences. It's like that in life, too.* BY S.T. KARNICK

"Leo McCarey," said the French director Jean Renoir, "understands people better than anyone in Hollywood." Ernst Lubitsch, the creator of brilliant, delightful screen comedies, said, "That boy McCarey is one of the best." Charles Laughton called him "the greatest comedy mind now living." Orson Welles said of McCarey's *Make Way for Tomorrow* (1937), "It would make a stone cry." McCarey created the screen personae of Cary Grant and of Laurel and Hardy, pioneered the job of the writer-director, and won Academy Awards as best director for *The Awful Truth* (1937), and for direction, picture, and original story for *Going My Way* (1944). His films made huge amounts of money—*The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945) was the highest-grossing release in its studio's history—and critics loved them. By 1945 he was the highest-paid man in the entire country. After World War II, his popularity slipped, but *An Affair to Remember* (1957, a remake of his 1939 film *Love Affair*) proved that he could still please both audiences and critics.

Thirty years after his death from emphysema in 1969, however, McCarey seems almost forgotten by the new generations that have canonized other

*S.T. Karnick is editor of* American Outlook, *published by the Hudson Institute.*



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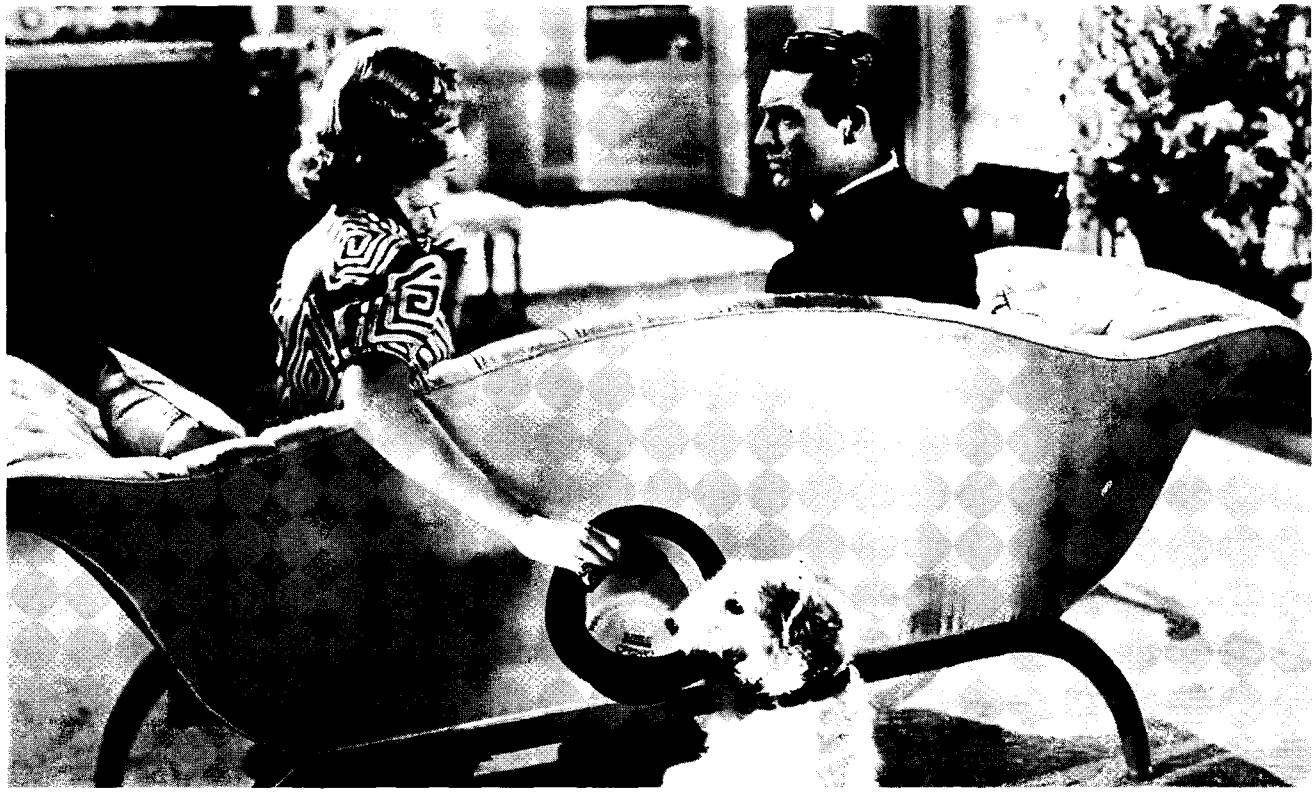

Both photos: Archive Photos

*Above: Irene Dunne and Cary Grant bicker in* The Awful Truth. *Below: Grant and Deborah Kerr flirt in* An Affair to Remember.

directors of his era: Hitchcock, Ford, Capra, Chaplin. And yet, that anonymity may be the strongest indicator of his greatness. McCarey's self-effacing style gave his films power and allows them to retain their force even today.

McCarey started out at the Hal Roach comedy factory in 1921, directing shorts featuring Charley Chase and Laurel and Hardy. The fundamental narrative element of such films is the gag, and since character and motivation were of secondary importance, the progression of gags had to be extremely precise. McCarey's 1929 *Liberty* provides a classic example of this structure. Stan and Ollie, having escaped from prison, are in a car hastily changing their clothes. They accidentally put on each other's trousers but are forced to flee before they can exchange. After a series of perfectly inevitable gags, they end up on top of a skyscraper under construction—with a large, angry crab in Ollie's trousers.

Unlike most of his colleagues, McCarey was able to continue this approach after graduating to feature films. Throughout his movies, trivial matters and small mistakes lead to enormous consequences. In *Indiscreet* (1931), for example, a woman's chance meeting with her sister's former lover triggers a series of events that threatens to turn a romantic comedy into a tragedy. In *Duck Soup* (1933), Rufus T. Firefly (Groucho Marx), president of Freedonia, loses his temper—which results in war with a neighboring country. In *The Kid from Spain* (1932), Eddie Williams (Eddie Cantor) is placed, unconscious, in a girls' dormitory as a practical joke—which causes his expulsion from college and his posing as a bullfighter to escape an armed robbery charge. In *Belle of the Nineties* (1934), Tiger Kid (Roger Pryor) breaks up with Ruby Carter (Mae West) after hearing a false rumor of her infidelity—which leads to a fixed boxing match, a hotel fire, and a murder charge. In *Six of a Kind* (1934), J. Pinkham Whinney (Charles Ruggles) reluctantly lets his wife (Mary Boland) save money on their second honeymoon by advertising for traveling companions (George Burns and Gracie Allen)—who cause a series of mishaps that culminates in the Whinneys' falling off a cliff.

McCarey's commercial success enabled him to graduate to more challenging subjects. As his stories matured, however, his narrative technique remained the same. In *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1935), gruff Westerner Egbert Floud (Charles Ruggles, in an excellent performance against type) gets drunk in Paris and plays poker, winning a butler, Marmaduke Ruggles (Charles Laughton). This results in a concerted and unwelcome effort to turn Egbert into a dignified gentleman. (Egbert's wife apologizes for Egbert's drunkenness, "Je suis mortifee. I'm traze amazed.") A simple card game leads to a moving comic meditation on marriage, social class, snobbism, hypocrisy, democracy, and the meaning of equality. The same pattern is followed in his more serious stories: *Make Way for Tomorrow*, *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (1942), *My Son John* (1952), and *Satan Never Sleeps* (1962).

None of this was mere habit or coincidence. In a 1969 interview, McCarey said, "I have a theory . . . which I call the

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Digital Press. Below and opposite: UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

ineluctability of incidents. The idea is that if something happens, some other thing inevitably flows from it—like night follows day; events are linked together." This isn't just the application of slapstick structure to feature films; it's a way of thinking. Little sins—or, in the case of *Good Sam* (1948), little good deeds—have enormous consequences. Rather than being character-driven or plot-driven, McCarey's stories are morally driven, each decision ineluctably leading to new circumstances.

McCarey made up many of his films' best comic lines, bits of comic business, and even whole scenes, in the course of filming. The screenplay for *The Awful Truth*, for example, bears only a passing resemblance to the finished film. Irene Dunne, who played the female lead, greatly enjoyed working with McCarey, but Cary Grant, the male lead, was less enthusiastic about the prospect, never having done this sort of sophisticated comedy before, and even offered to pay the studio (Columbia) to release him from the picture. Studio head Harry Cohn refused, and Grant's career took off—though he never gave McCarey much credit for creating the film persona that became Grant's trademark.

*The Awful Truth* remains McCarey's most celebrated comedy and one of the best of the screwball genre that flourished in the 1930s. It begins, in true McCarey fashion, with a character making a small mistake. Jerry Warriner brings his wife Lucy some California oranges—rather than ones from Florida, where he was supposed to have been, thereby exposing himself as a liar and adulterer and bringing on the couple's divorce. While waiting for the decree to become final, Lucy moves in with her Aunt Patsy (Cecil Cunningham), enjoys custody of their pet fox terrier, Mr. Smith, and takes up with neighbor Dan Leeson (Ralph Bellamy), a cloddish but wealthy oilman from Oklahoma. Jerry, meanwhile, romances a ridiculous showgirl and then an heiress. Jerry breaks up Lucy's romance, Lucy breaks up Jerry's, and they reconcile.

Upon this thin story, McCarey hangs a series of scenes that demonstrate the joys of spontaneity and improvisation. Jerry, arriving at Lucy's house for his court-appointed visiting time with Mr. Smith, meets Dan Leeson and, after a few wisecracks, begins banging loudly on the piano while the dog "sings," making it impossible for Lucy to talk with her beau. In return, Lucy later pretends to be Jerry's vulgar sister, imitating a sexy nightclub act to stop Jerry's engagement: "There's a wind effect right here," she says, "but you'll just have to use your imagination." Finally, Lucy manipulates Jerry and two policemen into a situation that forces Jerry to admit his love for her and commit to fidelity.

*The Awful Truth* exemplifies the style McCarey carried through all his work. In the first, comic half of *Love Affair*, Terry McKay (Irene Dunne) meets Michel Marnet (Charles Boyer) aboard an ocean liner, and they fall in love, although each is already engaged to someone else. Moreover, Michel, an artist and playboy, has never worked a day in his life, and Terry has been too fond of fine things such as pink champagne. So they promise to meet in six months if they both manage to change enough to give marriage a chance.

But then, exactly midway through the film, it suddenly turns serious. Terry, while looking up at the Empire State Building—"the nearest thing to Heaven" because her lover awaits her there—is hit by a car and crippled, perhaps permanently. She misses the meeting, and the couple gets together only after learning about what they really want out of life, in the film's more dramatic second half. As the film progresses, McCarey steadily strips them of the worldly things that stand in the way of true happiness. Michel gives up his pride and takes a job painting signs. Terry loses her physical freedom and her singing job. Michel's losses, however, make him a better painter, and his art begins to



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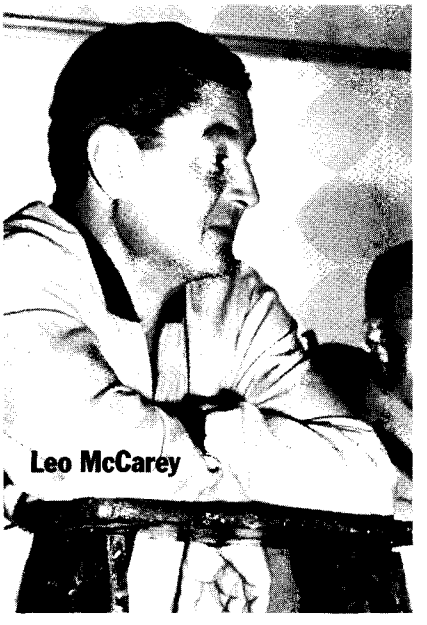
sell. And Terry's sufferings help her learn patience. After finding their separate callings, Michel and Terry find each other once again.

In his two most popular films, *Going My Way* and its sequel, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, McCarey further developed his notion of the ineluctability of incidents. The movies follow Father Chuck O'Malley (Bing Crosby) as he saves a rundown church and a failing school—his easygoing approach puts him in conflict with the more rigid Father Fitzgibbon (Barry Fitzgerald) in the first film and Sister Benedict (Ingrid Bergman) in the second. Fitzgibbon is too old to change but eventually sees the wisdom in O'Malley's ideas. Sister Benedict learns to unbend, teaching a boy to box and smiling as her young students rehearse the Christmas play they have written and never perform the same way twice. The two films seem designed to show the interplay of law and grace, and McCarey's technique of improvising within a strong structure fits the theme perfectly. O'Malley manipulates wealthy factory owner Horace P. Bogardus into donating his brand-new building to the school, but, as Sister Benedict says, it was built "in answer to our prayers." Both Bogardus's planning and O'Malley's improvisations are in service of a will greater than their own.

The amount of prayer in McCarey's films is unique for a Hollywood director. He even included a prayer meeting in his Mae West film, *Belle of the Nineties*. Anguished over the loss of her sweetheart, West asks her maid to pray for her, and as the revivalists sing "Pray chillun, and you'll be saved," West joins the chorus from a balcony above. The scene ends with shouts of "Hallelujah!" and a close-up of a man shouting, "My soul to God! My soul to God!" Such scenes of gratuitous piety are common in McCarey's world.

McCarey's masterpiece is *Make Way for Tomorrow*, his own favorite. Based loosely on a book by Viña Delmar, the film tells the story of Barkley and Lucy Cooper (Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi), an elderly couple who lose their home of fifty years as the story begins. They tell their grown children they have nowhere to go, and the dreary, middle-aged children decide to split the parents among them, with Bark going to hypochondriac daughter Cora's shabby New England home and Lucy staying in New York City with peevish, social-climbing George (Thomas Mitchell) and his family in a cramped Park Avenue apartment.

McCarey lets the story unfold slowly, as the audience gradually realizes the children's selfishness while the parents try to fit into their new places. Cora decides at last to send her father to her sister in California, ostensibly for his health. Meanwhile, George, at his wife's urging, resolves to send Lucy to a nursing home.


Leo McCarey

Before their final separation, however, Bark and Lucy meet in New York one last time. They stroll through Manhattan, and sit on a park bench to reminisce. They test-drive a limousine, at the salesman's insistence, and when he realizes that they are in no position to buy, he merely laughs at his mistake and cheerfully drops them off at the hotel where they spent their honeymoon decades before. Upon finding out about their previous visit, the hotel manager invites them to be their guests for an evening of dinner and dancing.

Throughout this sequence Bark and Lucy treat each other with a kindness and courtesy that was probably old-fashioned then and is all but inconceivable now. The strangers they encounter are equally kind: The checkroom girl is delighted to meet them and introduces the couple to the manager. The manager listens to their stories and laughs sympathetically. And the bandleader plays a tune for them and smiles at them as they leave the floor. The contrast between this kindness from strangers and the coldness of their family could not be more distinct—and yet is expressed quite subtly. Bark and Lucy drink and dance together, sharing memories and a chaste kiss. They fall in love again. But of course it cannot last, for Bark must board the train for California. "If I should never see you again," he tells his wife of five decades, "you're the nicest person I ever met, Miss Breckenridge." The train leaves the station, and Lucy is left behind.

McCarey's *Make Way for Tomorrow* flopped at the box office, much to the director's disappointment. But it's easy to see why audiences found the film discomfiting. If the Cooper children are selfish and dreary, how did they get that way? It hardly seems possible that Bark and Lucy were perfectly wonderful, loving parents yet all their children turned out smarmy, distant, and selfish. Bark and Lucy are clearly good people whose lives were filled with good intentions, but they always seem interested only in each other. Even in the magical final sequences, they thank their benefactors but exhibit a detachment from them. And McCarey's invariable technique of drawing large consequences from little causes suggests this has been the pattern of their lives together. The parents' insularity and selfishness, through a long accumulation of minor transgressions, results in the insularity and selfishness of their children.

This is where McCarey's ineluctability of incidents rises to the level of art. In the world inside McCarey's movies, events have an inexorable logic by which our actions have gigantic consequences. That's true in the world outside, as well, and it's why audiences remember McCarey's films, whether they remember his name or not. ♦



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Once a tightknit but downtrodden blue-collar community, the hometown of Bruce Springsteen, Freehold, New Jersey, has been gentrified. The inspiration for such working-class anthems as Springsteen's "Thunder Road" and "My Hometown," Freehold is now a wealthy, yuppified commercial district, with lots of jobs, high taxes, and SUVs.

—*News item*

## MY DADDY'S HOMETOWN

Well my daddy used to drive me through this old town
Drag me from the bumper, tryin to keep me down
Showed me the textile mill, gray and brown and shuttered and quiet
Now it's a Cheesecake Factory
Screws up my Atkins diet

(CHORUS)

This is Freehold Town my daddy's hometown
Everybody's gotta job
Feel like I'm gonna drown
In cash
Gonna drift away
On my 401(k)

Me and Caitlyn we fell in love gettin our MBAs
At the Wharton School we argued all day
She believed in a gold standard for every nation
I argued for a floating exchange rate adjusted for inflation
Measured against a fixed basket of goods
Under the summer sky we made love in the woods.

So Caitlyn she got pregnant and man that day our dreams all died
We was forced to open a string of Starbucks franchises on the Jersey side
The hard boys parked their Rovers outside the Borders
Makin our nanny take their Frappuccino orders
Now I lie awake at night and give baby Brittany a squeeze
Wonderin why Charles Schwab keeps raisin his transaction fees

This is Freehold Town my daddy's hometown
Everybody's gotta job
Feel like I'm gonna drown
In cash
Gonna drift away
On my 401(k)
Or some other form of liquidity



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# The Rise (and Fall?) of the Public School

Paul E. Peterson is Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government, Harvard University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Two seminal events transformed the educational institutions of the West—the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1455 and the Protestant Reformation in 1517. The press undermined the monopoly on learning exercised by the medieval monastery. No longer were ancient manuscripts laboriously transcribed and illustrated by monks for an exclusive audience. Once the Bible went into mass production, people no longer learned their spiritual lessons by contemplating the statuary adorning cathedral doors.

Bible reading became integral to the Protestant Revolution when Martin Luther translated the Bible from Latin to German, thereby making written language accessible to the German-speaking masses. The same was done for English speakers with the King James Bible, which even today shapes our speech.

It was John Calvin, however, who laid the spiritual groundwork for universal learning. Because the Calvinist faith was rooted in direct encounters with God's word, reading became a religious requirement. On arriving in America, Calvinists established seminaries and colleges to sustain both the intellectual and the spiritual well-being of their communities.

In Europe, the Catholic Church responded by making education the centerpiece of the Counter-Reformation. Thus as late as the seventeenth century, education was still the domain of the spiritual world.

With the rise of powerful nation-states—Spain, England, France, Germany, and Italy—education became increasingly secularized as those seeking to build powerful nation-states discovered that public schools were a remarkable tool for nation building.

In the United States as well, learning the three Rs was initially left to home and church. But when Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany threatened New England's Calvinist culture, the Massachusetts legislature compelled parents to educate their children. Public school advocates thus saw education as a way to achieve a uniform culture among an increasingly heterogeneous people.

In the twentieth century, nation builders from Stalin and Mussolini to Nehru and Sukarno have found state control of education to be not just an engine for economic development but, more important, a means for achieving political integration. Today most everyone—liberals, conservatives, democrats, or authoritarians—believes that the modern state requires universal, compulsory, state-financed education.

When education has been securely tied to the power of the state, however, new issues arise. Why does the schoolchild no longer know in which century, much less in which year, the printing press was invented or the Reformation began? How can government-sponsored education be reconciled with liberty and diversity? Do governments have the zeal and conviction that effective education requires? Or do state-controlled education systems inevitably become ossified and corrupt? Can the dominance of the state-controlled system be challenged?

As the century draws to a close, public demand for choice in education is rising. Can today's reformers create new institutions as powerful as those of the sixteenth century? Or will state-controlled schools mount a counter-reformation more effective than that mounted by the seventeenth-century papacy?

Finding the answers to these questions may take a century, if not a millennium.

*— Paul E. Peterson*

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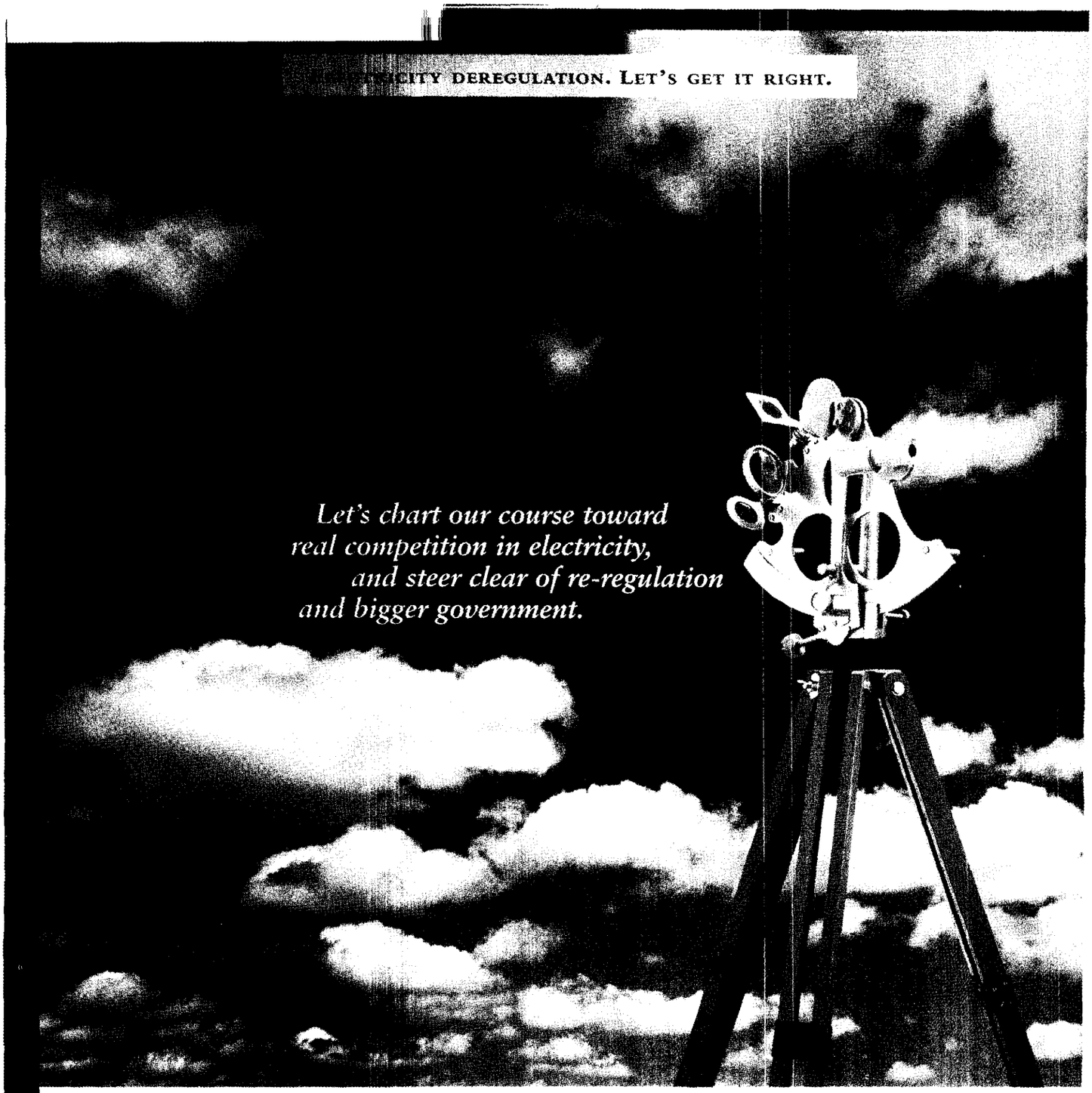


Electricity competition promises many benefits for consumers. New services. New products. And lower prices. But as we enter this new territory, let's make sure every step we take brings us closer to actually delivering on the promises of competition.

Let's proceed in the direction of free market competition, not more government control. Let's make sure that rules and regulations apply equally and fairly to all electric suppliers. And let's give consumers the opportunity to choose any supplier they want, including the ones they already have.

If we map out the right course now, we'll be going in the right direction tomorrow. Right for competition. And right for every home, school and business that counts on affordable, reliable electricity every day.

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